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Her Majesty, Adelaide.
QUEEN DOWAGER.

THE
Lady's Closet Library.

THE HANNAHS

OR,

MATERNAL INFLUENCE ON SONS.

BY ROBERT PHILIP.

AUTHOR OF

THE MARYS, MARTHAS, LYDIAS, AND THE LIVES OF BUNYAN,
WHITEFIELD, AND DR. MILNE, &c. &c.

"My son, forsake not the law of thy Mother. A foolish son is the
heaviness of his Mother."—PROVERBS.

LONDON :

GEORGE VIRTUE, IVY-LANE.

1841.

568.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY JOSEPH RICKERBY,
SHERBOURN LANE.

TO

HER MAJESTY ADELAIDE,

THE QUEEN DOWAGER.

AS

REVERED AND BELOVED BY BRITISH MOTHERS,

THIS

MATERNAL SERIES

OF

The Lady's Closet Library,

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BY

THE AUTHOR.



PREFACE.

THIS little Work will be accompanied by two much less, for children,—“THE CHILD JESUS,” and “THE YOUNG EMMANUEL, the *intended* Example of Early Piety ;” because “the nurture and admonition of the Lord” himself, form the *only* rule given to Christians for the religious training of their children. Should this attempt to illustrate and promote Maternal Influence commend itself to the church of Christ, the next volume will trace that influence on daughters.

R. P.

London: Ball's Pond, Kingsland, 1841.

THE HANNAHS.

CHAPTER I.

THE PECULIARITIES OF CHRISTIANITY TOWARDS MOTHERS.

“A mother in Israel.”

Deborah's Song.

BRITISH and American maternal character wants only a larger infusion of Christian principle, in order to rival that of the mothers in Israel, which Revelation has so openly and honourably embalmed. For if even the floating influences of our national Christianity render mothers superior to levity, frivolity, and sentimentality, what might they not be if fully under the special influence of all the hopes and principles of the glorious Gospel? They are not, however, at large, aware of the aspect

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of that Gospel upon their condition and character. Its *peculiarities* in their favour are not familiar to many of them. From oversight or humility they mistake much of the economy of mercy in their own case. The attention of mothers is therefore most respectfully solicited to the following peculiarities of Revelation, in reference to their character and duties.

It is as truly as frequently said, that women, and mothers especially, owe much to Christianity. Wherever it is not, they are degraded and oppressed. Wherever it is, they enjoy their proper rank and influence. Christianity is thus the Ark and the Covenant of their rights. This is, however, but a small part of the special provision which the glorious Gospel has made for their temporal and spiritual welfare. For besides restoring them to their natural place in the scale of society, and throwing open to them, in com-

mon with men, all the fountains of grace and mercy, the Gospel employs its strongest motives to strengthen their claims upon the loving-kindness of their husbands and children. “*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.*” Thus the grand motive which enforces and confirms all the claims of God and the Lamb, is brought to bear directly and fully upon their domestic happiness. Their husbands are solemnly bound to feed and fan conjugal affection at the high and holy altar of Redeeming Love.

The mother who is not struck and affected by these Scriptural facts, may well blush at her own insensibility and ingratitude. For “*what more*” could God or the Saviour do, to render her person sacred, and her rights inviolable? The Gospel places her, like the mother of Jesus, *nearest* to the Cross, and commends her

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to the heart of her husband, as Jesus commended Mary to the care of John. It is not, therefore, the fault of Christianity, if any husband is unkind or inattentive. He sins in the face of the brightest lights, and the strongest laws, which emanate from Calvary on earth, or from the eternal Throne in heaven. His conduct ought not therefore to divert her attention from the claims of the Saviour on her love and obedience. These are immense and immutable, however ill her husband may act. His disregard of the sacred obligations laid upon him, will not excuse nor palliate her neglect of the great salvation. God is not unkind, the Saviour is not unfeeling, whatever her partner may be.

It is not, of course, easy under such circumstances, and whilst the heart is almost broken and the spirits sunk or soured, to give all that attention to eternal things which they demand

and deserve. It is not, however, impossible. For one grand design of the everlasting covenant is, to furnish "*consolation*," when our "*house is not so*" as the heart wished and hoped it would be. There is balm in Gilead, and a Physician too, for the wounds of the maternal heart, however deep or inflamed these wounds may be. But if both are neglected or trifled with, let no one wonder that such a mother is miserable. She cannot be otherwise, whilst she thus "*despises her own mercies*." Indeed, one chief cause of her misery is, her *ingratitude* to the God of salvation. For there is no mystery in the trials of any mother who trifles with the great salvation. They may be all utterly undeserved, so far as her character and conduct relate to her husband. He alone may deserve the whole blame of making her unhappy. But however good or strong the case which

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she could make out in her own behalf, and against him, her misery is no *mystery*, if she has never given her heart to the religion of Christ. That religion takes such an interest in mothers—makes such ample and honourable provision for the comfort of mothers—opens such a field for the usefulness of mothers—and is so prepared and pledged to bless and sanctify their influence, that if they neglect it, or withhold their hearts from it, the Providence which guards it *must* punish them. For, to spare them entirely, or very much, whilst they are overlooking or evading the high claims of salvation and eternity, would be cruelty and injustice to their children. It is, therefore, to check the heedlessness or heartlessness of such mothers, that Providence makes their path thorny, and their crosses heavy. They cannot train up their children in the nurture nor in the admonition of the

Lord, whilst they themselves do not love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity ; and therefore God will not *allow* their children to see them happy until they see them holy.

It is no refutation of this argument to say, that there are many happy mothers who have no religion. There are happy maniacs in Bedlam ; and a mother who is happy without “ *a good hope through grace,*” is a moral maniac, however she may sing or smile. For how can that be happiness, which excludes God and the Lamb from the heart, and prayer from the house !

And as this argument is not refuted by the mistaken gaiety of such mothers, neither is it affected by the trials of pious mothers. They are not, indeed, exempt from trials, nor always superior to their influence ; but no “ believing wife ” would exchange lots with an “ *unbelieving wife,*” whatever were the

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domestic comforts of the latter. The former would be wretched, and would count herself a wretch, if without the fear of God and the love of Christ. Whatever, therefore, be her trials, or however they may tempt her at times to impatience, she never thinks of purchasing relief from them by abandoning religion. Even if her religion be one cause of her domestic sufferings, she feels through all her soul that to give it up, would be to barter eternal happiness in heaven for temporary peace at home. Nor is this the only feeling which keeps her firm in her principles: she feels too that she could not enjoy any domestic comfort apart from the approbation of God and conscience. How could she? A woman who knows and believes the Gospel, must see, as by sunbeams, that if she turn her back upon God and the Saviour, she cuts herself off from happiness, both here and hereafter.

Another striking peculiarity of the Gospel, in reference to mothers, is, that it appeals to their maternal tenderness, and employs that tenderness to illustrate its own fulness and freeness. The God of salvation has chosen the maternal heart as the chief emblem of ⁷ his *own* heart. When He would illustrate his pity or his impartiality towards them who fear him, he draws the emblems from a father's heart; but when the ardour and unchangeableness of his love to them are to be shadowed forth, mothers alone furnish the types. (Isa. xlix. 15.) Thus they are associated with the brightest stars of heaven, and with the sweetest flowers of the earth, as images of the beauty and benevolence of Divine love.

It is not without special and gracious design that Revelation has thus consecrated the tenderness which Providence has implanted in the maternal bosom. The same hand that

strung the love-chords of a mother's heart, strikes from them the *music* of the Gospel—expressly for a mother's ear. She cannot always visit the sanctuary on the Sabbath. Her attendance at the house of God is liable to many interruptions, during the infancy and illness of her children. She cannot always “do the things she would,” nor all the things which others do, in the public service of God. But to balance these privations, whilst they are inevitable, and to prevent them from injuring her spiritual and eternal interests, whilst they last,—God has wisely and kindly made her own heart the image of His heart, that she might be able to preach the Gospel to herself at home, when unable to hear it in the sanctuary. In order to see and feel that “GOD IS LOVE,” a mother has only to look within herself, whilst her own heart is thrilling with tenderness, or throbbing with compassion

over her children. These maternal yearnings and emotions are *living lectures* on the character of the God of salvation. Thus, by this fine arrangement between nature and grace, God has fully provided for the religious improvement of mothers, when their domestic duties necessarily keep them at home. Then their own hearts become "lively oracles" of the Gospel, if they interpret their own maternal feelings agreeably to the *spirit* of the Gospel. It is, on behalf of their souls, what their own love and sympathy are on behalf of their children. Thus a mother's heart may be to herself "the candle of the Lord," when she cannot sit under "the golden candlestick" of Zion. It is adapted, and intended to be so; and it would be so, were the word of God allowed to inform and affect it well.

It is much to be regretted that this Scriptural view of maternal love is not more familiar.

It is eminently calculated to produce and improve maternal piety. Some mothers, from natural timidity, or mistaken views of the Gospel, are *afraid* to hope in God, or to take comfort from his promises. They are not averse to religion in general, nor ill affected to the plan of salvation by grace. They wish and desire to be true Christians. They think and pray often about their souls. But they do not see their own way or welcome to the hope of salvation. They dare not venture to lay hold upon Christ for eternal life. Such mothers have, however, *within* themselves an answer to all their doubts and fears in this matter. What is it?—not a heart that needs no divine change, nor yet a better heart than men towards God and godliness; no, but a tender mother has towards her children a heart which, in its maternal love, is a living exemplification of the heart of God. He feels

for *her* soul, in its peril, all the solicitude she felt when hanging over her suffering or dying infant. He is as willing to welcome her at the cross, as ever she was to lift her weeping child from the cradle to her bosom. He will be as much pleased to see her hoping in Christ for salvation, as ever she was to see her babe smile again, after a fit or a fever. “*The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, and in them that hope in his mercy.*” Thus a mother, desirous “to be found in Christ,” has no more reason to fear rejection, than her babe has to fear for its life in her arms. The Saviour will no more cast out a praying mother, than she would cast away her first-born. The Holy Spirit will no more refuse to renew and help her, than she would refuse to feed her child. She has not indeed such *natural* claims upon the love or pity of God as her children have upon her heart and hand. No

one has any natural or legal claim upon mercy. Mercy is not, however, less certain because it is a free gift, than if it were a just debt. The word of God is as good for a *gift*, as it could be for a *debt*; because "God cannot lie." Now, as He has promised to be all that to us, and to do all that for us, which we are bound to be and do for our children, and infinitely more, His promise may be safely trusted, and its fulfilment calculated upon, for it is confirmed by an oath, and ratified by the blood of his Son.

There is another peculiarity of Christianity, in reference to mothers, which deserves particular attention. It makes their domestic duties *religious* duties. This fact is too much overlooked, and too seldom explained. The consequence is, some mothers imagine that it is impossible to be religious, whilst their children require so much attention. They even

say, that their hearts and hands are kept so full, from morning till night, that they cannot read, nor pray, nor think of anything but their family. This is, however, an exaggerated and caricatured view of family affairs. Children must sleep at times. Mothers must rest at intervals. The intervals may be both short and irregular ; but they are quite sufficient for all the reading and prayer which God expects from "nursing mothers." Besides, if God have anything to do with the life, health, or welfare of our children, the utter neglect of prayer is a flagrant neglect of parental duty. It is likely also to draw upon parents the chastising rod of God ; and, when they are laid aside, what is to become of their children then ? How can a sick father work for his family, or a sick mother watch over them ? O ! no policy is so short-sighted as that which, under the pretence of family claims, sets aside

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the claims of God and the soul. It is the direct way of perilling, in time and eternity, all that parents hold dear. The system may not entail immediate domestic judgments; but it is sure to end fatally if not abandoned soon.

But how easily may it be abandoned by well-disposed mothers! No class in society have fewer changes to make in their habits and line of conduct. No class fewer temptations to surmount. Their domestic duties are indeed many and engrossing, and even harassing at times; but they have not, like the bustle of the world, a tendency to harden or corrupt the heart. The usual conduct of domestic mothers would be *practical* religion of the very best kind, if the motives of it were *religious*. It wants only right principles, in order to be "true holiness." Did love to God and the Saviour run through the doing and

enduring of exemplary mothers, as love to their children influences them, their industry and patience, and devotedness to their family, would be piety of the highest order ; working, watching, nursing, planning for the comfort of her children, might all and easily be rendered service to God, as well as to her children ; yea, *glory* to God, as well as a credit to herself,—were such a mother to bring into her system the influence of the love of Christ. She has not to change her plan, but to increase her principles. She has not to lessen her attention to her family, but to prolong it in the fear of God. She has not to become less a *mother*, but more a Christian.

If these hints and facts throw any light upon the subject of maternal piety, and prove that it is as practicable as it is imperative, the subject may be still further commended and endeared by a review of the REWARDS which

usually accompany such piety. Now, it secures to a mother the *love* and *esteem* of her children. A pious mother never can be forgotten nor despised by any one of them. She may be forsaken for a time by a prodigal son, or grieved by a foolish daughter ; but neither can forget her, or lightly esteem her. Her character is placed beyond the reach of scorn in their hearts. Whatever else they may shake off, they cannot shake off the memory of her maternal holiness. Even if they come to laugh at religion, they dare not laugh at *her* religion. HUME durst not ridicule his mother's piety.

Now, even this degree of moral influence is worth securing. Could the minds of her sons be no further *magnetized* by a godly mother, than just to prevent them from thinking meanly of her godliness, she has not laboured in vain. She has implanted in their inmost soul an imperishable conviction of the beauty

of holiness, which will haunt them in all their wanderings, and most likely be the means of reclaiming them. But this, although not "a small thing," is the least part of the reward. None of their labour of love shall be, eventually, "*vain in the Lord.*" Accordingly, the family biography of the Scriptures furnishes no instance of unrewarded maternal duty. Even in the case of Solomon, wild as he became, and fearfully as he departed from the God of his father for a time, maternal influence was not in vain. The mother's counsels and remonstrances to the young prince melted the old king, as will be seen in the chapter on Solomon's history. We shall see, also, that every one who really deserved the emphatic name, "a Mother in Israel," had both a marked and mighty influence upon her sons. It will require some *looking*, however, in order to see the truth of this assertion; for the evidence of

it, although marked, does not lie upon the surface of the narrative, as that narrative floats in popular recollection. She must both read and reason for herself, and closely too, who would discover the silent stream of maternal influence in the homes of the early patriarchs, Jews and Christians. It runs through their domestic circles, but without noise or ostentation. I have taken some pains to trace its windings, and have found much pleasure in wandering along its banks, in order to *guide* mothers to the "green pastures" created by these "still waters," that they too may create such green pastures around the fold of their own flock. And they will do so more readily and successfully by studying the Scriptures, than by making any of the many new works on this subject their guide. There is not, perhaps, too much attention paid to the works which gave rise to Maternal Societies, nor to the

hints collected in the *Mother's Magazine*; but it is a notorious fact that pious parents, "in the olden times," who had little or nothing but the word of God to guide their domestic economy, trained their sons to a godliness and manliness which modern plans and artificial maxims do not realize. "There were *giants* in those days," when there were no rules for *manufacturing* character. Whilst parents just did what God told them to do,—teach His words to their children,—the mould of Divine truth produced noble characters! There is neither sneer nor sarcasm against "improved methods" of religious education in this remark. ~~We~~ need more improvements of the system. Nothing, however, deserves this name which would divide or divert the attention of our children from the Scripture characters who have "the seal of God on their foreheads, and in their right hand." We shall *dear* both

the intellect and the conscience of our children, if we let uninspired men take hold upon their young imagination before patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs have won their young hearts. Only "men of God" will command godly homage. A better man than Abraham, even if you could find one, would not be so *sublime* to your boys as "the Friend of God," the companion of angels, and the father of Isaac. A wiser man than Daniel, even if you could find one, would be no *Belteshazzar* to your sons or daughters unless he had been in the lions' den at Babylon. It is God's men who make boys feel what a man should be. There is an almost *magical* influence about the "men of renown" to whom God spoke and angels ministered.

The principle of this hint is peculiarly applicable to the impression made upon the young mind by the mingled sweetness and sublimity,

the alternate grandeur and loveliness of the Saviour's character. It is impossible, perhaps, to define or analyze the precise effect of his character upon either the male or female mind at first, the transitions of feeling are so rapid and abrupt. It melts and amazes, pleases and perplexes, dazzles and blinds; but the very extremes of perception and emotion, and the confusion of the whole, *swell* the heart with the consciousness of a PRESENCE which prepares the mind to hear with awe and love that "great is the mystery of godliness"! The greatness of the Saviour is "good news" to a child whose first ideas of him were conveyed by the sweet title, the Good Saviour! Doubt not this, however vague your child's conceptions of Emmanuel may be. They have a vastness, also, which he feels, although he cannot define it. Accordingly, you could not make your boy so *breathless* with wonder,

by telling him the real dimensions of the morning or evening star, or by trying to give him some idea of the solar system, as by telling him the glories of the Lamb slain. Tell him, by all means, everything worth knowing which he can bear to hear; but be sure of this, that you can interest him in nothing (*play* excepted) so much as in well-told accounts of the grace and glory of the Son of God. You may make him a talker by the *little* things of simplified science, but you can only make him a thinker by the great things of revelation. A Christian mother should aim at nothing less than to be the mother of *Christians*, if she would have her boys men.

CHAPTER II.

A MATERNAL LAMP.

WERE ANGELS *parents*, how cheerfully and perfectly they would train up their children in the ways of Heaven ! Do not smile nor frown at this supposition, because Angels “neither marry nor are given in marriage.” I know it to be a mere fancy ; but still it may teach us practical wisdom, if it be well managed. I want (and do not *you* ?) to get a calm and clear sight of the relation we stand in to our children, and of that relation in which we both stand to God and eternity. I want (and do not you also ?) to see what would be parental *duty*, and what would be parental *interest*, were both we and our children as

pure and happy as Angels. Now, this might have been the character and condition of mankind. It would have been so, had not our first parents fallen. Well, had they *stood*, what would have been their duty and interest as parents? Not exactly the same as ours now is, certainly; but still they would have had much to *do* for their children. Infancy, however innocent, would have been weak; childhood, however cherubic in holiness, would have been imperfect in knowledge. Thus even in Eden, "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little," would have been wanted by Cain and Abel, Adah and Zillah, had they been born as pure as Adam and Eve were created; for knowledge cannot coexist with infancy, however holiness might do so. Neither knowledge, nor the complete powers of knowing, can be combined with infantile senses. Like "new wine in old bot-

ties," the former would burst the latter. Thus mind and body must grow together.

It is therefore no fiction nor fancy, that much parental duty must have devolved upon our first parents, however well they had kept their first estate. They would have had to watch and water the "olive plants around their table," as well as to keep and dress the Paraisaie garden. Yes, *their* children, however pure or perfect, would have required both "the nurture and admonition of the Lord" in childhood, in order to enable them to distinguish between the tree of knowledge and the tree of life; between prayer and praise; between sabbath and week-days. And if there must have been *lessons* even in Eden, how indispensable they are in the family! If Eve could not have been exempted from the duty of pointing her sons and daughters to God and Heaven, even if they had been as young

Angels, much less can you be exempt. Indeed your obligation to train up your children "in the way they should go," is just as much more urgent, as the world is worse than Paradise, and as fallen nature is weaker than innocence.

You now see that it is for a practical purpose I set out from an imaginary point. I am no speculator in religion. It is, in fact, just that I may not be betrayed by false views, nor misled by half views, nor blinded by familiarity, that I venture to suppose states and cases which have no existence, in order to see what would be duty and wisdom in any possible state of being or of bliss. I am not, therefore, afraid nor ashamed to ask the question, What would be angelic duty, were Angels parents? Now you see at a glance, that whilst their duty to young Cherubim and Seraphim would be very different from our duty to young children,

still lessons would be wanted even in Heaven, were there angelic childhood in Heaven. Angels as they are, even the oldest and the highest of them are themselves *learners* there. Paul says that principalities and powers in heavenly places, learn the manifold wisdom of God through the medium of the church. (Eph. iii. 10.) Peter says that Angels desire to "look into" the sufferings and glory of Christ. Now my argument is, were they surrounded by young Seraphs, to whom all the mysteries and glories of redemption were new, would it not be both their duty and their delight to teach them as they were able to bear? How early they would lead them to the throne with themselves to worship, and teach them to veil their faces and their feet with their wings in the presence of God and the Lamb! How carefully they would point out to them the difference between the new song as sung by

redeemed spirits, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain for us;" and as sung by the angelic hierarchy, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain"! I repeat it, lessons of this kind would be wanted even in Heaven, were there an angelic infancy before the throne, or in the mansions of glory.

There is indeed no such thing there. There are, however, countless millions and myriads of infant spirits in Heaven. You perhaps have one or more little stars in glory. If so, they are *magnetic* stars to your heart! So much so, that you would not think an Angel ill employed in drawing them near to the Sun of Righteousness. Just observe how naturally and fondly the heart springs up to welcome the sweet hope, that all in Heaven feel interested in the glorified spirits of infancy and childhood! Remember too that many a holy mother and her babe died at the same *critical*

moment, and were "carried together by Angels to Abraham's bosom." How such mothers must have delighted to lead their children to the throne, and to teach them the new song! You feel that whatever teaching infant-spirits may require in Heaven, it would begin best and be enjoyed most, by coming from the mothers who "gave up the ghost" in giving them birth. Not one of them would delegate it even to an Angel, in order to escape the service. Were *you* to "be with Christ in Paradise this day," your first desire after seeing Him "as he is," would be to see the spirit of your glorified babe; and whatever Angels or the spirits of the just had done for it before you arrived, you would gladly take all the service upon yourself, if allowed to do so.

I use very general, almost vague terms, in hinting at this subject, because it is im-

possible to tell how the countless hosts of redeemed infancy are trained to the *maturity* of being or blessedness. All we know is, that everything in Heaven is both new and unknown to them when they enter ; and therefore it must be communicated to them by some one, and most likely but gradually. And this, in their case, no more implies real imperfection, than different degrees in glory imply a defect of happiness in any class of the general assembly. Besides, it is *knowledge* only that I refer to ; and that has been but gradually communicated to Angels themselves, notwithstanding all the perfection of their nature. Accordingly, when the sealed book of the Divine Government was to be opened in heaven, no one in heaven, man nor angel, was able to “read” it, or to “open” it, or to “look thereon.” In like manner, when the seventh seal was opened, “there was *silence* in heaven for the space of

half an hour;" evidently because there was *ignorance* in heaven on the subject of that last mysterious seal.

The object of these remarks is both sober and practical, however fanciful their form may seem. They prove that childhood in any world, and under all circumstances, would require education. How much more then is it wanted in a world, where evil is more prevalent than good, and where childhood is not only weak and wayward, but also prone to evil! Accordingly, wherever children are not taught to fear and love God, they grow up ungodly, and often turn out vicious also. The school seldom makes up for the neglect of the nursery. The master cannot endear to them the God, the Saviour, or the Bible, which the mother has never commended, nor the father pointed out. Indeed, in the same proportion as a master tries

to communicate religious knowledge to children who have had no parental instruction on the subject, he is disliked by them, and viewed as a "hard master," just because he lays much stress upon what their mothers laid none at all. Even a father, however pious and prudent, will be reckoned "a hard master" and "an austere man" by his children, if their mother's knee is not an *altar* for their prayers, and a *desk* for their catechisms, and a *tribunal* for their faults. No one can endear religion to children, if their mother manifests no interest nor pleasure in it. Her indifference will defeat all human power, paternal and ministerial, whilst childhood lasts; and may defeat both for ever! Order, obedience, and formal lessons may, indeed, be enforced in spite of her neglect; but neither affection nor goodwill can be won to religion, if she oppose or do nothing to promote it.

Children are shrewd observers, and detect *contrasts* between their parents with an eagle-eye. They soon discover and prefer the parent who lets them have most of their own way. Still, the mother has their first love, and their chief confidence; and therefore she ought to be their first and chief teacher, until knowledge itself has some charms for them, and authority be required to make advice law.

This is especially true in regard to boys, because they are soonest withdrawn from her direct influence, and most difficult to mould. In general, they are neither so plastic, nor so long plastic, as girls. Unless, therefore, their moulding begins whilst their metal is pliant, they are sure to acquire some wayward *twist* from their own buoyancy, or to miss some happy bias of taste or temper, which their public education can never give

them, and which even their eventual piety may never fully conquer.

Were there, however, nothing else to tell mothers, than that

“ Just as the twig is bent, the tree 's inclined,”

and that its first bendings are given by their hands, true as this is, I would leave it to philosophers to tell them so. The maxim is, indeed, both wise and beautiful ; but it is very cold. If it *touch* the maternal heart at all, it is rather with fear than with hope. Although, therefore, I should be sorry if any pious mother forgot it, because hope without fear is as dangerous as fear without hope, yet I much prefer to remind pious mothers, that *Heavenly-mindedness* is better than the best philosophy, as their guide in bending the twigs of their “ olive-plants.” How would an *Angel* bend them, were they under his

eye, and in his hands, is indeed a question which some theologians would either laugh at or frown upon, as both sentimental and fanciful; and the question, how would a mother, if carried to heaven with her infant, think, and feel, and act for that child, if allowed to train it in any one of the "many mansions" there—may seem at first sight almost profane, as well as too fanciful. But, MOTHERS! ye cannot forget these questions, nor despise them, even if ye do not yet quite approve of them. The *smile* that now plays on your lips, and sparkles in your eyes, may be incredulous, but it is neither scornful nor indignant. And you have no occasion to blush for the *complacency* that beams in it. He who took little children from the arms of their mothers into his own arms, and blessed them, would not have rebuked any mother

in Israel, who had *imitated* his manner, look, and tones, in blessing her other children, after taking home the child which Jesus had blessed.

CHAPTER III.

EVE'S MATERNAL CHARACTER.

WE do not know much, certainly, about Eve, the first mother, after the expulsion from Eden, although she is

“The mother of us all.”

God has, however, told us more concerning Eve than concerning Adam. Of Adam's character and spirit, either as a husband or a father, after God “drove out the man” from dressing the garden to “till the ground,” we know nothing whatever, unless the *silence* of Scripture imply that he was neither very good nor very bad. None of his words or actions, after his banishment from the Tree

of Life, were deemed worthy of record or reference in the Oracles of God. There is not, however, the same silence as to Eve. Some of her sayings and sentiments were preserved by Revelation. They are indeed but few, but they are all emphatic, and rich in maternal virtue, if not also in faith, with one exception.

This fact is so seldom pointed out, by either commentators or preachers, that it will seem fanciful at first sight, if you have never studied the maternal history of Eve, nor considered how much a mother means when she expresses her joy "that a man is born into the world." The very *name* she gives to her "first-born" tells where her heart is set, and reveals her hopes of what he shall be. She calls him after some one who is dear to her, and whom she wishes him to resemble. In doing this, she hears some patriarch of her

kindred saying, like dying Jacob, "Let my name be named upon the lad, or the name of my fathers." (Gen. xlviii. 16.) And if she be, indeed, a pious mother, and names her boy after a pious ancestor, she hears too the voice of that patriarch praying like Jacob, "The angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads."

Thus there is much meaning, and emotion too, in giving names to infants, even now. There was, however, more of both when the first sons of the first mother were born. Eve had no ancestral names to choose amongst. The only name she knew was that of her husband,—and it, she did not choose for her first-born. Indeed, Eve called none of her sons Adam.

It deserves attention here, that the naming of the boys was her own act, and their names her own invention. Moses says expressly

of her third son, that she "called his name Seth: for God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew." (Gen. iv. 25.) In like manner, the name of her first-born, Cain, is just the sum of her exclamation at his birth, "I have gotten (*Kaniti*) a man from the Lord." (Gen. iv. 1.) Thus she expressed her own thoughts and feelings in giving names to her children; and if these primitive names are not what we call beautiful, the more is the proof they furnish that she was not ruled by vanity in selecting them, and that she had weighty reasons for the choice she made. For she might have found fine names ready to her hand. Adam had named the entire *animal* creation before Eve was made; and so *characteristically*, that God, who brought every beast and fowl to him, "to see what he would call them," said of the nomen-

clature, "whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was its name." (Gen. ii. 19.) Now it is well known to all Hebrew scholars, that the original names of many animate and inanimate objects are very beautiful, and all of them highly expressive. They are emphatically "*proper* names." Thus the *named* world, like the habitable world,

"Was all before her, where to choose."

Had Eve therefore been either vain or fanciful, ambitious or romantic, she could have gratified such a taste, just as Greek, Roman, and Barbarian mothers did afterwards, by calling her sons by the name of the noblest animals, and her daughters by the names of the fairest birds, the sweetest flowers, or the brightest stars. But she did not thus sentimentalize nor select. If she did not pay Adam the compliment of perpetuating his name in the family, neither did she mortify him by giving to any of her

children any name which he had given to beast or bird. Besides, she paid him a higher and holier compliment than the adoption of his name would have been.

We shall *feel* the truth of this by and by. In the meantime, it is impossible to forget, that it was a happy thing for Adam that neither his first nor his second son was called after him. Had either borne his name, it would have embittered his woe. It was well that neither the murderer nor the murdered was called Adam. Had the former been called so, the father would have *hated* his own name for ever afterwards, and the mother been afraid to pronounce it again. And had the murdered martyr been called Adam, the heart of Eve must have bled every time she called her husband by name. Although, therefore, Eve had neither foresight nor foreboding of the eventual catastrophe, and thus was influ-

enced by no fears in passing by the name of her husband in naming her sons, we are glad, both on his account and her own, that she did so; for although we have no great liking or respect for our first parents, we take no pleasure in their calamities, but would indeed fain hope that they became both penitent and pious after the promise of a Saviour was made to them. . Accordingly, we rather regret the apparent *uncertainty* which hangs over the grave of Adam and Eve. We do not allow ourselves to think them lost; and we ought not to suspect it, for it is nowhere said nor insinuated in Scripture that they were either impenitent or unbelieving, lived ill or died unhappy. Now even this *silence* as to their salvation is something. ' It forbids despair in their case, if it do not warrant the full assurance of hope.

You both see and feel that I wish to be exceedingly *cautious* whilst conducting you

into the first family of mankind; I am indeed willing to think as well as I can of our first Parents, and inclined to make the most and best of the little we know about their *domestic* character and system, because they are too often dismissed by sweeping charges and hasty assertions. Still, I am nowise inclined, but averse indeed, to go one step, or even a hair's breadth, beyond the words of Scripture. All the liberty I claim, or will venture to take, is to interpret the recorded sayings of Eve concerning God, just as Jews and Christians have always interpreted the sayings of God concerning Eve, according to their obvious spirit and import. Now, no Christian hesitates to believe that God meant by the promised seed, who was to bruise the head of the serpent, the Saviour of the world. Both the Old and New Testament keep up this name of Christ. When Eve therefore speaks

of that promise, or evidently refers to it, in giving names to her sons, she ought to have *credit* for all the faith, hope, and devotion, which either the letter or the spirit of her sayings fairly implies. How much that is deserves your notice.

On the birth of her first-born she said, "I have gotten a man from Jehovah;" and therefore she called him Cain,—the possession, or the *gotten-one*. On the birth of her third son she said, "God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel;" and therefore she called him Seth,—the substitute, or the *put-one*.

Now, to say nothing at present of either the obvious or the mystic import of this naming, the bare fact that her eye was distinctly and directly upon God, as Jehovah, speaks well for her piety. For, consider the situation of Eve when Cain was born; so lonely, helpless, and trying! The first mother was the most deso-

late mother the sun has ever shone upon. She had no experience to guide her, and none even of the most ordinary provision for such an occasion, except her "coat of skin" which God had given to her in Eden. In such circumstances, it would not have surprised us much had we been told that Eve was somewhat impatient or fretful. But no, we hear nothing of her privations, although they were even greater than those of Mary at Bethlehem. Eve had not even a "manger" to lay her first-born in ; and yet, like Mary, she neither complained nor sank. Is it not evident that both mothers were soothed and sustained, not only by the same Providence, but also by their sweet thoughts and hopes concerning the promised seed ?

But I will not hurry on the conclusions which seem warranted by the Mosaic narrative. There—all alone, inexperienced, and unpro-

vided for,—Eve's first thoughts and words were all Godward! His gracious hand and design absorbed all her attention; and as her maternal gratitude for "delivering mercies" has been deemed worthy of revealed record, may we not, ought we not to say of her "sacrifice of praise," what is said of Noah's sacrifice when he went from the ark to the altar, "the Lord smelled a sweet savour"?

I am, I confess, pleased with this view of the case; but chiefly, if I mistake not, because it is as *true* to the sacred narrative, as it is gratifying to a candid spirit. If it be what we wish, it is only what we read in Scripture. So far then we have no reason to be ashamed of our common mother after she was banished from Eden. She was evidently a *thankful* as well as a "joyful mother," under circumstances of peculiar trial. Greater comforts, indeed, do not often call forth equal gratitude to that of

Eve, nor lead to such distinct acknowledgments of the hand of God as she made.

I know that you now think better of her than you had wont to do, or had deemed it right to do ; but I will take no advantage of your good humour, nor of your growing candour, whilst I analyze and explain the remaining parts of the narrative. Now it would not be warrantable to ascribe to either Adam or Eve such a comprehension of the first promise as we have. It was not always well understood by either the Patriarchal or Jewish church even in later times, when it was more explicit. Still, as it was the *only* promise given to our first parents, and evidently intended to comfort them, we must, in justice to the wisdom and love of God, believe that it was intelligible enough to be comfortable. And being the only "light in the dark place" which their sin had made the world,

and coming as it did direct "from the Father of lights," there can be no doubt that it was both a light to their feet and a lamp to their path, when they fled before the flaming sword of the cherubim from the tree of life in Eden, to the wilderness created by the curse beyond the walls of the garden. Indeed, it would be absurd as well as impious to doubt this. Besides, we have in the conduct of Adam and Eve the best kind of proof that they understood the best part of the promise ; for *sacrifice* was evidently the chief act of worship which they practised and taught in their family. I say taught, because Abel had no personal revelation to guide him either to a sin-offering, or to "faith" in what the sacrificial lamb typified. In both believing and obeying, he was evidently imitating parental example, and walking in the way he had been trained up. This indeed is one reason why "God had respect

to Abel and his offering." Both "had respect" to what God had taught Adam and Eve to do, and to teach their children; for again I say, that the duty of sacrifice was not a revelation to Abel; he set about it, and went through it, not as if he had never seen or heard of such a thing before, but as one perfectly familiar with both the proper victim and process of typical atonement. "Abel brought the firstlings of his flock, and the fat thereof." (Gen. iv. 4.) Thus his worship is not introduced to us as anything new or strange, nor its acceptance as extraordinary or out of the common way; whereas Cain's offering is treated by God with a neglect and scorn, which show that Cain had scorned a well-known law of divine worship. Accordingly, God not only had no respect for Cain's offering, but also remonstrated with him as one who knew "well" and "ill" doing

in the divine service:—"If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at thy door." (Gen. iv. 7.) All this is an appeal to *educational* knowledge, and understood duty; not to personal revelations, or special visions. I might strengthen this argument by adopting the translation of "Lapetach Chatath Robets," "*a sin-offering lieth at thy door*;" for in more than a hundred instances in the Old Testament Chatath and Chatah mean sin-offering; and as the occasion was at the "process of time," "mikets yanim," "at the end of days," or on some anniversary like the great day of atonement, the sin-offering had most likely been laid at Cain's "door" by his father or mother, or by both, because they no doubt had but too much reason to suspect that he was inclined to do *ill* instead of "well" in the matter. I do not, however, avail myself of this highly pro-

bable and beautiful view of the case. "Sin is the transgression of law," and as it lay at Cain's door, or was chargeable upon himself only, he had evidently transgressed the law of his father's house as well as of his father's God.

Just observe now how the case stands. If the word sin here mean sin-offering, then either Adam or Eve had laid a lamb for a burnt-offering at their son's door, that he might have no excuse for disobedience; or a lamb had lain down at his door, which, even if it belonged to his brother's flock, he would have been welcome to use on such a solemn occasion. If again sin mean only guilt, then the guilt did not lie at the "door" of his parents, but at his own door alone. Thus, whichever translation is the best, both demonstrate the same thing,—that there was religious education in the first family of mankind.

For although we have no *formal* account of the laws or lessons taught to or by Adam and Eve after the Fall, it would be absurd to imagine either that God taught them nothing, or that they taught their children nothing, concerning the promised Saviour, and the mode and matter of acceptable worship. Both Cain and Abel evidently *knew* their duty; and therefore we cannot suppose that their parents were left in ignorance when they were sent forth from Eden in hope. And as we hear of no personal revelation made to Cain or Abel *before* their respective offerings were presented, we have not the shadow of a reason to suppose that there was any made to them, especially as God never made revelations nor wrought miracles but when there was a necessity for such special interpositions. Now there was no necessity of the kind in the household of our First Parents. They

left Eden clothed in the skins of beasts, which must have been used as sacrifices, and not killed as food ; for flesh was no part of human food before the Flood. Thus then the case stands so far ;—Sin lay “ at the door ” of any of the Adamic family who refused or neglected to worship God by sin-offerings, as the divinely appointed types of what the seed of the woman should suffer in bruising the head of the serpent, when He should be “ manifested to destroy the works of the devil.”

There is still one thing requires more explanation than it usually gets, before Eve's real sentiments can be gathered from her maternal sayings,—I mean the *murder* of Abel. That, indeed, is well explained by John to those who have studied John's argument and expressions. It may be doubted, however, if the generality have *studied* him. He says in answer to the ques-

tion, Why did Cain slay Abel? "Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." (1 John iii. 22.) There is however, another question; what evil *works* can John mean? Now we know of none whatever in the history of Cain, until the day he presented his own self-willed offering at the altar. Until "the process of time," when he had to sacrifice for himself, we know nothing *bad* of him. We know indeed nothing good of Cain prior to that day; but this is equally true of Abel. Besides, no charge of "evil works" is brought against Cain by God, until well-doing was neglected at the altar. And as to evil works, in the ordinary sense of these words, Cain had but few temptations, and fewer opportunities for such works. There was, remember, nobody in the world then to injure but his father's household, however much inclined he may have been

to work evil ; and it is nowhere said that he injured them. In like manner, we know nothing of Abel's "righteous works" up to the time of his first sacrifice at the altar. He also had no one beyond the family to do good unto, just as Cain had no one to do evil unto. Neither of their works, therefore, could have much reference to *moral* duties or virtues. John must mean chiefly, therefore, their works in the service of God, and not in relation to man. How then could Abel's righteous works provoke Cain, first to wrath and then to murder ? Esau hated Jacob, because Rebekah loved him best ; but Abel was not Eve's favourite son. Cain, the first-born, was the favourite. The name of the second, Abel, shows this, for it signifies vanity, or a vapour. Cain had then no occasion for jealousy. The question is, therefore, what could enrage him ? Now remember, he

had no *example* of either rage or cruelty to tempt him. The murder came from his own heart, for it had no precedent. But how came then the idea of the unknown crime *into* his heart? He must have had some motive or end in view, which he thought a reason or an excuse for so unnatural a crime. But he pretended not that Abel had ever injured him. Yea, God assured him before anger blazed into revenge, that Abel never would injure him,—“Unto thee shall be his *desire*, and thou shalt *rule* over him.” (Gen. iv. 7.)

There is thus no getting at the *secret* of the first murder by any ordinary process of inquiry, for there is no obvious provocation given or pretended to have been given. It is very true, Cain disliked the religion of Abel; and we know only too well that bigotry has shed oceans of blood. Cain, however, went to the

altar and presented an offering unto the Lord as well as Abel. So far their religion agreed. All the difference of its *acts* was in their offerings, or between the fruits of the ground and a lamb of the flock.

Will this difference account for the murder? Now, if it do not, it is, you must allow, as inexplicable as it is shocking. Look, however, at the whole facts of the case again. The slaying of Abel's lamb typified the sacrifice of the promised seed, or the *death* of the Saviour. Now Cain knew this fact, as we have already seen. As, therefore, he evidently regarded himself, and was regarded by his mother,—if not as the promised DELIVERER, yet as His first type and pledge, it is easy to see how a passionate young man, who was also proud and overbearing, would refuse to lay upon the altar of God, a sacrifice which seemed to imply his own death, or at least

the shedding of his blood. There is the real secret of his refusal to sacrifice the sin-offering ! He thought it would *commit* himself to the altar some day. And most likely it would have done so, as in the case of Isaac, if Cain had been a man like-minded as Isaac. Adam and Cain, I have no doubt, would have been called to go through the typical transaction which Abraham and Isaac went through, had they had their faith.

Now we shall get at the *secret* of the murder. When God publicly testified his respect for Abel's offering, both the fears and the aversions of Cain were confirmed. This ratification of the revealed fact, that the promised seed *must suffer*, in order to vanquish Satan, enraged the self-willed and haughty first-born son. "Cain was very wrath, and his countenance fell." Neither the reproof of God nor His advice had any good effect upon

Cain, but seem rather to have confirmed his determination not to commit himself by sacrificing.

In this spirit, Cain began to "talk with his brother Abel in the field," evidently for the purpose of *talking him over* to his own views and wishes. Vain experiment! Abel had sacrificed in *faith* of the sacrifice of the promised seed, and thus neither could nor would retract his belief of the truth, whatever that truth might involve for his brother; and he would be the more firm in his adherence to it, from the fact that nothing *fatal* would happen to Cain, even if the serpent should "bruise his heel," in the struggle. Indeed, it is highly probable that Abel encouraged Cain to be the typical representative of Christ crucified, just as Abraham encouraged Isaac afterwards, delicately, but firmly; affectionately to his brother, but loyally to his God. But Cain

was not an Isaac; he abhorred the advice, and slew the adviser.

Now you will both understand and appreciate the faith and hope of Eve, when she named her first-born son, and said, "I have gotten a man from Jehovah." She rejoiced thus, although she knew well that Cain could only be the grand forerunner of the Saviour by *suffering* something as well as sacrificing. In this she equalled as well as forestalled the faith and love of Abraham, as to their *kind*, although not in their degree. I mean, the prospect of the "bruised heel" no more abated her gratitude for Cain's birth, than the altar on Moriah did Abraham's faith. Both submitted meekly to their respective prospects for their children. In her case, this will be best seen and most felt when she named her third son Seth, saying, "God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel,

whom Cain slew." Now she discovered that Abel, not Cain, had been "the son of promise," or the typical seed; and Cain, the seed of the serpent, or as John says of him, "of that wicked one." But although she thus saw clearly again that "another seed" must be another *sufferer*, in some way, from the seed of the serpent, or the posterity of Cain, she complained not, shrunk not, cavilled not, but hailed Seth as the new type and pledge of the promised deliverer.

Thus Eve was quite another kind of woman, and far better than she has credit for in public opinion. Her sons, as pledges and representatives of Christ crucified, absorbed her chief attention, although she had many daughters, and does not seem to have had much help from Adam.

I do not forget, in thus doing justice to the character of Eve, that she had faults when

out of Eden, as well as sins in it. Her indifference to her second son is only too visible in calling him Abel, whether vanity, evanescence, or sorrow be the real meaning of that heartless name. He seems to have been the *twin* brother of Cain, and thus a weak or sickly child, not likely to live, or so *unlike* his father and brother, that she did not allow herself to regard him as the son of promise, in relation to Christ. Like Rebekah with Esau, she allowed appearances to create unfair partialities. Hence she called Cain "a man from the Lord," or a *godlike* manchild; and this overweening and unwise preference had, most likely, not a little to do with the proud and fierce character of Cain; at least a similar partiality in the family of Isaac evidently originated the fierce character of Esau.

CHAPTER IV.

MATERNAL INFLUENCE ON ISAAC.

THE brevity of the domestic laws of Christianity is sublime. They look and sound *like* Divine commands. We hear, not the voice of a man, nor "the voice of the archangel," but "the trump of God." It is god-like to command thus: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church;" "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as unto the Lord;" "Children, obey your parents, in the Lord;" "Fathers, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." We may apply to this sublime mode of giving *household* law, the exclamation of David when review-

ing his personal and family mercies, "This is not the manner of man, O Lord God." Man, and perhaps angels, would have gone into details, and definitions, and explanations of domestic duty, until words had darkened counsel, or left room for doubt and dispute; but God speaks volumes in a sentence, and all to the heart, by making love "the law of the house." Love like Christ's to the Church, for which He died, and subjection like that of the Church to her risen and enthroned Lord, are maxims which, like the sun, reveal themselves by their own light, and derive no more glory from any human sentiment, however wise or tender, than the sun from the stars: she is not a wise woman, therefore, who would trust either her rights or happiness to any feelings or principles, in preference to the love of Christ to the Church. And he is not a wise husband, who exacts

from his wife more or other subjection than the Church is under to Christ. And they are *unwise* parents and children who do not "set the Lord before them," in discharging the mutual duties of their relationship.

These hints account sufficiently, perhaps, for the brevity of family law in the New Testament. There is, however, another substantial reason for both the fewness and shortness of the domestic commandments. They are few and brief, because the biographical exemplifications of them in the Old Testament are many and long. The New Covenant gives short rules, because the Old Covenant gives vivid and full-length pictures of domestic life.

This fact has never been sufficiently illustrated, so far as I am aware. And yet it is strange that such a fact should not be made much of, both by the pulpit and the press ;

for as the Gospel is just the fulfilment and perfection of the Abrahamic Covenant, or the full-blown rose of Sharon from the sweet rosebud of Beersheba, it seems only natural to expect that all parental eyes would turn instinctively to the house of Abraham and Sarah, where parental and filial duties were first exemplified, in connexion with the Covenant of promise. All parents, whatever be their views of infant baptism, are deeply interested in marking, remembering, and inwardly digesting, the example of the first family with whom God established his Covenant, as a *family* distinction and blessing; for it was not thus given to Noah or Adam. Abraham was the first person selected to be the *direct* ancestor of the promised seed. Until the call of Abraham, that promise retained its Eden form, as the seed of the woman, and belonged to no family more than

another. When, therefore, God said to Abraham, "In *thy* seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed," the old promise had new influence, and was intended to give a new character to family discipline and education. Accordingly, God calculated upon its happy effects in both the family and posterity of Abraham thus: "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment." (Gen. xxviii. 19.) Accordingly, they did turn out better, both as a family and a nation, than any family or nation which preceded them, for bad as they were, compared with their privileges, they were the best people on earth, until Christ made Christians. Isaac, certainly, was such a son as the world had not seen from the day of Enoch's translation to heaven. And as to Abraham's six

sons by his second wife, Keturah, we know nothing bad concerning them. Neither Zimram, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, or Shuah seem to have been "sent away from Isaac," by Abraham, for any impiety or crime, but simply because the family had become too large for the house, and to prevent disputes about the inheritance after his death. Accordingly, he "gave gifts" to them all, on sending them away ; and the separation was in peace.

Thus, the Abrahamic family at large, although not so good as Isaac, were evidently better than Ishmael. And even of Ishmael himself we know of nothing so very bad, but that it may be as easily accounted for as the inferiority of the other six, by the inferior character of their mothers in comparison with Isaac's mother ; for Hagar was not only an Egyptian and a slave, but also a *malapert*, to say the least ;

and we know of no holy point whatever, about Keturah. Her character was altogether negative, and thus uninfluential upon all her six sons; except it be something, that they were as good as herself, or have nothing for or against them in Scripture.

It is thus impossible not to see and feel, that the difference between the character of Isaac, and that of his seven brothers whom we know by name, was chiefly occasioned by the different character of their mothers, as that *told* directly upon the children, and as it helped or hindered Abraham's paternal lessons and example. What an impressive and instructive fact is this! Even faithful, holy, watchful Abraham could not elevate his sons above their mothers' level! His influence was almost entirely defeated in the case of Ishmael by the pert and petulant spirit of Hagar; and it had no marked effect

upon the sons of the negative Keturah. It succeeded only with the son of holy, gentle, devoted, and noble-minded Sarah. She venerated her husband, as well as loved her son, and both for the sake of God, and because of His covenant with them ; and thus she made Isaac as much the *flower* of the Abrahamic family by the sweet influence of her own spirit and example co-operating with that of his father, as the Covenant did by its distinctions and privileges. This is not so well understood as it ought to be. Indeed, the character of Isaac is too much overlooked. Bishop Hall says, "Of all the patriarchs, none made so little noise in the world as Isaac ; none lived so privately, or so innocently ; neither know I whether he approved himself a better son or a husband. He gave himself over to the knife of his father, and mourned three years for his mother." Dr. Adam

Clarke says of Isaac, "He appears to have been generally pious, and deeply submissive and obedient. He was rather an amiable and good, than a great and useful man. If compared with his father Abraham, O what a falling off is here!" It may be fairly doubted whether either of these portraits of Isaac do full justice to "the son of promise." The bishop judged better when he allowed his feelings to carry him away in his fine exclamation at the altar on Moriah, whilst contemplating the holy rivalry of Abraham and Isaac in obeying the mysterious command of Heaven with equal resignation:—"O holy emulation of faith! O blessed agreement of the sacrifice and oblation! When Isaac considered that the author was God, the actor Abraham, and the action a sacrifice, he encourages the trembling hands of his father, and offer his hands and feet to

the cords, his throat to the knife, and his body to the altar. And Abraham is as ready to *take*, as Isaac to *give*. He binds those dear hands, which are more straitly bound with the cords of duty and resolution. He lays the sacrifice upon the wood, which beforehand burnt *inwardly* with the heavenly fire of zeal and devotion." Dr. Clarke also judged better when he allowed himself to feel most: "In this case, we cannot say that the superior strength of the father prevailed, but that the piety, filial affection, and obedience of the son yielded. All this was most illustriously typical of Christ. In neither case is the son forced to yield. Isaac *yields* himself to the knife: Jesus *lays* down his life." He who wrote thus of Isaac, ought not, when comparing him with Abraham, to have exclaimed, "O what a falling off is here!" His faith was equal to his father's, if it be the

fact that Isaac was as willing to suffer, as Abraham was to sacrifice. For, who does not feel instinctively, that it required as much faith in both the wisdom and authority of God to yield to the sacrificial knife, as to wield that knife; and that it was just as trying for the son to *take* death from a father's hand, as for the father to *give* the death-blow?

It is not conjecture, that Isaac was willing to be offered up in sacrifice; for, had he been unwilling, he was able to escape. All chronology proves that he was neither a child nor a stripling; and Abraham was now a hundred and twenty-five years old. The Jews reckon Isaac to have been at least thirty years of age at the time. Josephus supposes him to have been twenty-five. And the probability is, that he was thirty-three, the age at which his Great Antetype laid down His "life for the sheep." Had not Isaac, there-

fore, been willing to die, he was thus more than able to have resisted his aged father, or fled for his life. He presents, therefore, a sublime spectacle of both faith and resignation, on Moriah, as he allows himself to be "led as a lamb to the slaughter," and lies *dumb* upon the altar ! For it is not the least striking or instructive fact, that Isaac asked no more questions after receiving that answer to the inquiry, "Where is the lamb for the burnt-offering ?"—"My son, God will provide a lamb for the burnt-offering." From that moment, he was both silent and satisfied. What he saw then of "the day of Christ afar off,"—whether as much, or more, or less than Abraham saw, in the mysterious transaction,—we are not told, and therefore may not conjecture. But, whatever he understood by it, he calmly submitted to his own part in it ; and as that part was as trying to both

nature and grace as the part Abraham had to act, it is not unlikely that the son understood the sacrifice as well as the father did.

But however that may be, it is not necessary here to dwell upon the typical character of Isaac, seeing no one has to sustain a typical character now, in reference to Christ. Besides, neither his father nor mother taught him to lay down his life for Christ. Abraham durst not tell him in direct terms that he had to do so; and Sarah did not know of it until it was done. Observe, however, what a lesson comes out here! The general principles taught to Isaac by his parents, and the *spirit* inculcated and exemplified by them, prepared him to go calmly and nobly through a mysterious trial, which none of them anticipated, and which would have made an apostate of an ill-taught youth, and overwhelmed a half-taught one. You

see and feel at a glance, that Ishmael, the son of Hagar, would have fled from the altar on Moriah when he saw that there was no lamb for a burnt-offering. With his fierce and fiery character, which she seems to have encouraged rather than checked, he certainly would have wrested the sacrificial knife from his father's hand, if not plunged it also into his father's heart, rather than yield himself a sacrifice unto God. In saying this, I do not think that Ishmael hated or despised Abraham as he did Isaac ; but that he had neither such love to God, nor such faith in the promised Saviour, as would have led him to hold any life "precious" which really perilled his own life. Moses says that he "mocked" Isaac, and Paul that he "persecuted" him, even at "the great feast of his weaning," and this whilst he was but a child, who had never given any provocation to his "wild" brother.

Abraham, indeed, had no suspicions that Ishmael could hate Isaac, and therefore was sadly grieved when Sarah said to him, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son;" but God approved of Sarah's precaution and proposal, more than of Abraham's unsuspecting forbearance; and said to him, "Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman. In all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto *her* voice." (Gen. xxi. 12.) Thus, whatever her suspicions were, God did not think them, as Abraham did, ill founded or unnecessary. Ishmael's designs, and Hagar's malice, may not have been *deadly*; but they were evidently dangerous; and therefore God himself made Sarah's maternal counsel His own positive law to Abraham, and His own act of banishment to both Hagar and Ishmael.

O, how invaluable are *general* principles,

or well-digested views of religion, in early life! These Ishmael had not imbibed, because his mother had not followed up his father's system or example; and thus both his character and spirit rendered him a dangerous inmate of the family, in more senses than one. But Isaac, although never taught that he might be called to *suffer* for the Saviour, of whose coming and birth he was the pledge and prelude, was yet so well taught in all things belonging to his everlasting peace, that a trial unprecedented in the annals of time, and unlike all the then known analogies of both the Divine character and government, neither overwhelmed his spirit, nor staggered his faith. He rose in grand parallel to the emergency, without parade or effort; and bowed his head on the altar with a grace not unlike the majestic manner in which Jesus on the cross "bowed His head and gave up the ghost,"

when "through the Eternal Spirit he offered himself unto God, a sacrifice of sweet-smelling savour." Now, although nothing exactly like this can occur again, there are still occasions when only the principles and spirit of Isaac can triumph over temptation and trials, or stand the shock of calamity. We ought not, indeed, to forbode for ourselves or our children any extraordinary crisis, and especially no series of calamities; but we ought to prepare them and ourselves for the *worst* that can happen.

And, happily, this is not impossible! The great principles of evangelical piety are quite equal to enable even the young, as well as the old, to resist the greatest temptations which the world, the devil, and the flesh can beleaguer or bewilder the soul with; and to grapple with the most appalling forms of loss, suffering, or sorrow. But, alas, how few, like Abraham and Sarah, teach their Isaacs anything which

is even *adapted*, not to say adequate, to prepare them for what may be prepared for them ! The vague maxims—still more vaguely taught in general—“ Be good, do your best, and trust in Providence and grace,” do not amount to the nurture or the admonition of the Lord. That nurture is the faith of the glorious Gospel ; and that admonition, the Lord Jesus Christ’s own laws and example. Temptation can only be overcome effectually, by imitating Christ in the wilderness ; bitter cups can only be drunk meekly, by imitating Him in Gethsemane ; the fear of death can only be surmounted, by imitating Him on Calvary ; even the mockery of the ungodly can only be despised, by copying His firmness and forbearance ; and no young person will try either to please or serve God, as a *son* or *daughter* of our Father in heaven, who is not taught to imitate the cheerful devotedness of Christ to His will

and glory. CHRIST IS CHRISTIANITY, remember; and therefore Christianity is not taught in any family, where only good morals and vague maxims are inculcated. What could these have done for Isaac on Moriah, when all the ordinary principles of both morality and religion seemed about to be violated by his father, and abandoned by his God? It was, indeed, well for Isaac, yea essential, that he was both a virtuous and unworldly young man: for had he been either vicious or earthly-minded, even heavenly hopes and principles would have been too dim and weak to sustain his soul in patience or serenity; for a good hope through grace has but little power in a bad conscience, or in a selfish mind. In him it had great power, because it had both fair play, and no dead weight or drawback upon it, from his general habits or spirit. But still, it was his *faith* that

triumphed over his fears, and held nature in subjection to law and grace.

You begin now to see clearly how much Sarah's spirited resolution to rid Isaac of the presence of both Hagar and Ishmael, had to do with the formation of his principles and character, for the strong measure was all her *own* at first, nor did Abraham's reluctance change or modify her maternal purpose. Her son's principles were in danger from the "wild man." Ishmael had "*mocked*" the typic pledge of the Saviour, in the person of Isaac. This was enough to make a believing mother afraid for her son, and a believing wife firm with her husband : for let a boy be exposed to hear the covenant of grace, or his own connexion with that covenant and its Mediator, made a subject of mockery from day to day, by a bold and dashing youth,—and such Ishmael

evidently was,—farewell to all warranted or rational hope, that that boy will grow up either a good or a wise man! Indeed, he is likely to become a mocker; and almost sure, even if he do not, to take but a loose hold of the truth; and quite certain to have *low* associations with even its sublimest doctrines. Nothing poisons the young mind, or perverts its views of the Gospel, so much as the mockery of the ungodly. And for this reason, amongst others, nothing is so mortifying to a boy as to be laughed at, and nothing so tempting to him as the friendship of spirited lads. Separation from those who can joke and caricature the religion of the God of his father and mother, is his only safeguard. Sarah, therefore, did only right when she insisted upon the separation of Isaac and Ishmael. There was far more danger of Ishmael cor-

rupting Isaac, than probability of Isaac reforming Ishmael: better, therefore, save one than risk both.

The banishment of Ishmael has, I think, been unfairly judged by some, and thus Sarah's conduct unjustly blamed. It did not necessarily peril his soul. For anything that appears to the contrary, Ishmael improved in both character and spirit after his banishment to the wilderness, even although he married an Egyptian, and became a hunter: for we hear of no more mockery or persecution from him against his brother, but find Ishmael and Isaac acting together at the cave of Machpelah on the death of Abraham their father. (Gen. xxv. 9.) Besides, it is expressly said that "God was with the lad," when he was driven into the wilderness of Beersheba. (Gen. xxi. 20.) Thus it appears from all we know of Ishmael's *personal* history, that between the

parting advice of his father, and the timely interposition of the angel of the Lord at the well of Laharoi to save his life when his mother left him in despair, that he was led both to think and act better than he had done at home; for the words, "His hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him," are rather prophetic of his posterity, than descriptive of his own conduct after his exile. He continued, indeed, "a wild man," in the sense of being a roaming man, and as compared with his contemplative and domestic brother; but not in the sense of being a wicked man, as he seemed at one time so likely to turn out.

This, I am aware, is making the most and the best of the little we know of Ishmael's personal history. I cannot forget, however, that in some way or other he redeemed his name from both the cloud and the odium

brought upon it in his youth ; for some of the Jewish high priests and generals were not ashamed to be called Ishmael. But after all, how *little* his improvement amounted to, even if I am correct in making it out to be so much ! What a *contrast* remains between Ishmael and Isaac, all through life ! We never hear of Ishmael going “into the fields at eventide to meditate ;” nor of any altar he built unto the God of his father, nor of any grove he planted in Beersheba to call upon the name of the Lord in, as he had seen Abraham do. In fact, we have no proof that he became a *godly* man, although some that he grew a better man than he promised to be at first. I am not, therefore, inclined to retract, nor even to qualify much, the suspicion that he would have saved his own life at all hazards upon Mount Moriah, had he been treated as Isaac was. But however this may be, what pious mother or father

could be satisfied with a son like Ishmael? It is not, indeed, uncommon to apply his name to an unpromising son, and cry, "O let Ishmael live before thee!" and any parent would be glad to see even a moral reformation in a wild youth. But still, no parent should be satisfied with mere morality, nor with superficial piety, in either son or daughter. Indeed, those who can be pleased with this, are not likely to secure even this. Our aims must be higher, if we would not have our attainments in the family lower. Why then not aim at forming *Isaacs*? There will be *Ishmaels*, in the worst sense, where this is not done; and the trouble of doing it is a trifle—is nothing—is less than nothing—compared with the *pain* (so common!) which extorts the bitter, almost hopeless, and so often unsuccessful cry, "O let Ishmael live before God!" For what did Abraham teach, or Sarah endear,

to Isaac, that was painful to either to communicate or commend? Any *tears* which accompanied their parental efforts, were neither bitter with grief, nor burning with despair; for their efforts began in *time*, and went on in harmony, and thus ended in the formation of a fine *domestic* character in their son.

I say, domestic character; and this is saying a great deal, especially to mothers; and not a little to fathers also, who know the *world* by experience. There is, in fact, no profession or sphere of public life can be well filled, with advantage to the public and credit to the occupant, without domestic tastes and habits. He who has not a good many *home* feelings, will either overstrain himself soon, or unbend where he ought not; for when home has no charm for a man, conscience imposes few checks upon him, and the world still fewer.

I am not prepared to say, however, that

Isaac is a model for general imitation, in our bustling and artificial times. His meditative habits, and meek piety, and ardent love to his mother, and profound veneration for his father, are worthy of all veneration. Next to his noble bearing at the altar, there is nothing finer in *taste* also, than his taking the wife of his youth to the tent which his aged mother had so long occupied, and adorned, and hallowed; and which had been graced by the presence of Jehovah himself. "Isaac brought Rebekah to his mother Sarah's tent, and she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death." (Gen. xxiv. 6, 7.) All this is the very perfection of both pure taste and holy love. And thus the memory of such a mother, will be hallowed by such a son. Still the *public* character of Isaac, however well suited to his own times, place, and typical position, is not a universal

model, except in its religious principles and domestic habits. It is neither enterprising nor active enough for our dispensation and responsibilities. Mere *Isaacs* could not meet the religious claims of our times, nor manage the business of conventional and artificial life. Young Samuel and Timothy must now be held up in the family along with Isaac, and all three confronted with Paul and Antipas, if we would form such Isaacs as the church and the world need, and as God calls for.

CHAPTER V.

MATERNAL INFLUENCE ON JACOB.

ALL our knowledge of Rebekah, until she became a mother, is very pleasing. We meet her first tripping alone to the family well, with her pitcher upon her shoulder, to draw water for the household, although she had brothers who loved her, and no doubt servants at her command; for her father's house was evidently a respectable establishment. (Gen. xxiv. 25.) It is equally evident from the sacred narrative that Rebekah was quite a favourite at home, and was as much respected as beloved. Old Eliezer of Damascus, Abraham's steward, who was a *shrewd* as well as a good man, saw at a glance that Rebekah was a general favourite

in the family ; and plied them with golden and jewelled *speeches* about Abraham's wealth and worth, and about Isaac's brilliant prospects, as well as with "precious things," or costly presents. "The Lord," said he, "hath blessed my master greatly, and he is become great; and He hath given him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and manservants and maidservants, and camels and asses. And Sarah, my master's wife, bare a son to my master when she was old,—and to him hath he given all he hath. And he said unto me, The Lord, before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house." This is a fine specimen of special pleading. Its tact and integrity are highly creditable to Eliezer. Rebekah had evidently won the old man's warmest esteem; and therefore he took for

granted that her mother and brothers would be as unwilling to part with her, as he was anxious to obtain her for Isaac, unless it was demonstrated to them that they could not get, nor wish, for her a better match in all the world. Accordingly, he not only appealed to the old ties of country and kindred, but also to new prospects and nobler rank. He also mixed *himself* up with the pleadings, which well became a venerable steward, inasmuch as his years, and experience, and piety were a pledge both to Rebekah and her family that he would not mislead them. Eliezer told him, therefore, that he was under a solemn *oath* to Abraham to take no wife for Isaac from amongst "the daughters of the Canaanites," but from his "father's house;" thus bespeaking their sympathy for himself as a responsible servant, who had a high character to maintain, as well as a holy and delicate

trust to discharge. "And now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my Master, tell me; and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand or to the left." (Gen. xxiv. 49.)

All this is fine management, without the shadow of manoeuvre. Eliezer was a diplomatist, but without duplicity. The finest part of the old man's eloquence, however, is the *devotional*; and it implies, certainly, that the Mesopotamian family were not ignorant of the true God, nor indifferent to His will, nor weak in faith as to a special Providence. Both Laban and Bethuel said, when they heard how Eliezer had sought Divine direction by fervent prayer, and acknowledged it with adoring gratitude, "The thing proceedeth from Jehovah: we cannot speak unto thee good or bad. Behold, Rebekah is before thee; take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife,—

as Jehovah hath spoken." We thus learn that Rebekah was not brought up in an ungodly family, nor a stranger to good principles.

We might conclude this to have been the case, from the single fact that Abraham set his heart upon the family of Nahor ; for, judging from all we know of him, he would not have done this, had they been idolatrous or ungodly. He seems also to have heard some favourable account of Rebekah herself, for in his directions to Eliezer he speaks of only *one* woman. The facts justify this conjecture. Rebekah never moved a step whilst Eliezer was asking her questions, nor showed any haste to go home when he gave her ear-rings and bracelets ; but " the damsel *ran*, and told her mother's house," the moment " he bowed down his head and worshipped Jehovah, and said, Blessed be the Lord God of my

master, Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of His mercy and truth." (Gen. xxiv. 27.) In the same spirit, or not at all dazzled with her jewelry, she said to her brother Laban, "Thus *spake* the man unto me ;" not—"these jewels the man gave me." There would, indeed, have been no sin nor shame in speaking of the presents also ; but she said nothing about them. I point out this feature in Rebekah's character thus distinctly, because superficial readers betray their own ignorance unnecessarily, when they flip-pantly say that she was wooed and won by "jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment." Common sense, if candid, would say, "Rebekah's heart was evidently not touched, until she heard the name and worship of the Lord God of Abraham." Then she was so delighted, and knew so well how welcome the tidings would be at home, that

she ran and told all. Besides, neither her brother nor her mother was sure that she was won, even when Eliezer had exhausted all his eloquence, and treasures too. The old man wanted them to decide for her ; but they had too much respect for Rebekah, pleased as they evidently were with the offer, either to force her inclinations, or to anticipate her decision. " They said, We will call the damsel, and inquire at her *own* mouth." They had given their consent at once, and fully, when they heard and saw all that Eliezer had to lay before them ; but they used no influence with her, nor even hinted at their own hopes or wishes, until they called her in, and put the question to her, " Wilt thou go with this man ?" When she answered, " I will go," then, but not until then, they showed all their cordiality.

So far Rebekah's character bears strict

examination, and promises, if not great things, to turn out well. And she is not less interesting or promising when she sets out on her long journey. She did "go with the man;" but not alone, nor accompanied with "her damsels" only. She took her nurse, Deborah, with her also; who, if we may judge from the honourable tomb awarded to her when she died at El Bethel, under the "oak of weeping," must have been a good woman, as well as a valuable nurse in the patriarchal family. Rebekah was thus prudent as well as enterprising. She had to travel nearly five hundred miles; and Eliezer's venerable character, although a pledge to herself for all she could wish, was not all the shield she needed, before the public of Mesopotamia or Canaan. She was also modest as well as prudent. With instinctive sagacity she was the first to suspect, that a man meditating "at eventide," in

the fields by Beer Labairoi, must be Isaac; for that "Fountain of Life" was just the place where he was likely to soliloquize in; graced as it had been by the presence of the Angel of the Covenant. (Gen. xvi. 14.) The typical heir of the covenant was just the man to be expected in that spot. Besides, Isaac, although meditating, was also *meeting* the party led by Eliezer. She therefore asked her guide and guardian, "What man is this that walketh in the fields to meet us?" And the moment he said "It is my master," Rebekah was off her camel, and veiled from head to foot; and not a step further did she advance to meet Isaac. With a proper sense of both female delicacy and dignity, she left it to him to introduce himself, and welcome her. And he, with equal decorum, did so the moment he heard Eliezer's account. And well he might, for "she was very fair," as well as good.

Thus far also Rebekah sustained her character well. Altogether, she won Isaac's heart at once. From what he saw, and from what he heard of her, he deemed her worthy of even his mother's tent, and gave it up to her as her own dwelling. And how well he loved her, may be judged from the single fact, that fond as he was of Sarah's memory, he was "comforted after his mother's death" by Rebekah's presence. (Gen. xxiv. 67.) She had also no small nor unsalutary influence over him. Isaac was rather a meditative than an active man whilst Abraham continued alive; but when his father died, and his twins were born, he became not only a spirited farmer in Gerar, but also reopened all the wells which Abraham had digged in both the valley of Gerar and the plain of Mamre, and revived their hallowed names, as memorials of his father's intercourse with God and Angels.

And in all this, Rebekah evidently encouraged him.

During this period of his domestic life, the Lord blessed him "an hundred-fold, and he waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became *very* great." (Gen. xxvi. 13.) This, of course, pleased Rebekah; but it became her snare,—as great wealth usually proves.

I have lingered as long as I durst upon the bright side of Rebekah's history, partly because she has not always justice done to her *maidenly* virtues, and chiefly that it may be seen and felt that she did not sin ignorantly, but presumptuously, when she imposed upon her blind husband in his old age, and impiously perverted her favourite son into a deceiver and a liar. Her conduct in this matter was so deliberately base, that there is reason to fear that she was the original

instigator of the hard bargain between her sons when Esau sold his birthright. But however this may be, it is certain that she was anything but an *impartial* mother, even from the first. Rebekah never loved Esau.

Is it possible to account for this at all, without seeming to excuse or palliate her maternal guilt and imprudence? Attempts have been made, I am aware, almost to acquit her of both impiety and presumption, even in the worst part of her conduct. Be not afraid; I am not about to *insult* the Scriptures, nor you, by repeating these unwarranted apologies for maternal crime. Moses *drops* Rebekah entirely, from the moment she had completed her treacherous and reckless experiment. He leaves her history just as she begins to reap the bitter fruits of her impious policy. "I am weary of my life,—what good shall my

life do me, if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth?" are the *last* words we hear from her lips. How she lived or died afterwards, Moses does not condescend to mention. He tells how and where her nurse Deborah was buried, but says nothing about Rebekah's grave. This single fact ought to have deterred all from attempting to palliate her guilt.

Explanation however, is as much needed, as palliation is thus forbidden. Now, it is in connexion with Esau's personal *appearance* at his birth, as well as with his becoming "a man of the field," that we are told of her love to Jacob; and certainly Esau was very unlike his mother, for she was "very fair;" and he seems to have had as little of his father's likeness, so far as complexion went. Isaac however loved Esau, as well as Rebekah loved Jacob; and therefore we cannot suppose that the boy's aspect was repulsive.

Still personal appearance, when very fine, has undue influence at times in the family, especially when the *contrasts* are somewhat painful as well as striking. It is, however, both unwise and unjust to yield to such influence. It is indeed impossible to *admire* plainness or coarseness as much as beauty and symmetry, but it is not impossible to treat them equally well. In fact, the child that has no beauty ought to be most kindly treated, and never made or allowed to feel that plainness is even a misfortune. Rebekah, I fear, made Esau feel that he was not so *handsome* as Jacob; and he made her feel, by marrying against her will into idolatrous families, that he cared nothing about her opinion or wishes.

Another fact which throws some light upon her conduct is, that she knew by special revelation, before her sons were born, that "the

elder should serve the younger," and that they were to be the ancestors of distinct nations. (Gen. xxv. 23.) God himself had revealed this fact to Rebekah, and therefore she did only right in never forgetting it. She ought not to have lost sight of it, even if Isaac forgot it, or misunderstood it, which he seems to have done. She put, however, her own construction upon the oracle; and her interpretation of it was utterly unwarranted by either the letter or the spirit of what God promised. He merely said, "The elder shall serve the younger," not that the younger should inherit the birthright, or its special privileges. This was her conclusion, not God's promise. True, it was God's *intention* that the covenant should be established with Jacob in preference to Esau, as it had been with Isaac in preference to Ishmael; but she knew nothing of His divine purpose.

We now reach the rock, on which she made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. It was presumption; a rock on which many split. Because God had pledged himself to do something great for Jacob, she dared to fix what that special blessing should be. He had promised some kind of supremacy to Jacob, and she took for granted that it must amount to all she thought good for him. Esau was to serve in some way, and she determined to make Jacob his master in all things. This was fearful tampering with both the secret purposes, and the revealed promises of Jehovah! It could not fail to pervert her conscience. She who took such liberties with the *mind* of God, in order to gain her purpose, was sure to take liberties with the law of God, when it stood in her way. She who told herself that God meant more than he had said, was in the direct way to invent and

tell lies to others, in order to gain her object.

This reprehension of Rebekah's presumption is not a whit too severe. Truth requires, however, the exposure of Isaac also ; for if she made too much of the oracle, he made too little. His heart was as unduly set upon making Esau the typical heir of the Covenant, as her heart was on making Jacob so. And this, notwithstanding Esau had profanely despised the birthright, by selling it for a single meal. That contempt of such a high and holy distinction, Isaac ought to have solemnly laid before "the God of Abraham" at once, with strong cries and tears for special direction, in a dilemma so perplexing and perilous. But the old man seems to have tried to forget the crime of his favourite son, and to have acted as if nothing of the kind had happened. Now this flagrant neglect on the part of Isaac,

may have been a strong temptation to Rebekah to defeat by guile and stratagem, what he attempted without a clear warrant. It is, however, no excuse for her ; for Jacob's *buying* the birthright from a famished brother at a paltry price, was as infamous as Esau's sale of it for "one mess of pottage." She ought to have felt this, and she would have *resented* it had Jacob been the seller, and Esau the buyer, in the profane transaction. It was, therefore, high presumption on her part, to take any step to install Jacob as the heir of the Covenant, without first inquiring "before Jehovah" for the path of duty.

In like manner, it was no excuse for her fraud upon Isaac, that she had known him to tell a falsehood to save his life in Gerar. He had said to the men of Gerar, "She is my sister, for he feared to say, she is my wife ; lest, said he, they should kill me for Re-

bekah:" but that lie ought to have made truth and candour very dear in her estimation, for it perilled her own character and safety. It did not, however, bring any judgment on Isaac at the time, and therefore she seems to have perverted the forbearance of God towards her husband, into an excuse for herself, when she ventured to employ fraud on behalf of Jacob.

Thus, no examination of circumstances can do anything favourable for Rebekah in this matter. From the moment she dared to *judge* for God, and to bend his words to her own ambitious projects for Jacob, both truth and duty were dethroned in her conscience; and eventually, even her heart became reckless. "Upon me be thy *curse*, my son; only, obey my voice," she said to Jacob, when he said to her, that obedience to her voice would bring a curse, and not a blessing, upon his head!

There is a hardness of heart, as well as a foolhardiness, in this, which no words can express. If demoniacal possession had been known in these times, one might have suspected that "seven devils," or even "Legion," had entered the heart of Rebekah! Who that saw her at the well of Padan-aram, or in the tent of Beersheba, or in the groves of Mamre, or in the corn-fields of Gerar, could have imagined that she would come to this pitch of impiety? Had nurse Deborah, or steward Eliezer, warned her against daring the curse of Jehovah, or against exposing her son to it, how she would have kindled with scornful indignation, and anticipated the proverbial question, "Is thy servant a dog?" Truly, the heart is desperately wicked, as well as deceitful! Here, we are compelled to exclaim, not only, "Lord, what is *man*?" but also, "Lord, what is woman?"

There is nothing warrants this judgment of Rebekah's heart so much as the fact, that her son's unsophisticated pleadings against her base plans, not only did not cut her to the heart at all, but actually made her more reckless of both principle and consequences. Just observe how Jacob's natural eloquence and good feelings touch your heart :—" And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man. My father peradventure will *feel* me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver ; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing." (Gen. xxvii. 11, 12.) What a pity—what a crime ! to spoil a youth like this ! The rich *bloom* on such a tender conscience ought to have been more effectual than even a " flaming sword," to deter any hand, and intimidate any heart, and especially a mother's, from everything that could rub it off, or tarnish it. But

Rebekah defied God and man, in the face of all this! Surely Dr. Watts thought of *her*, when he used that tremendous expression,

“Should mothers *monsters* prove.”

Rebekah, however, did not teach Jacob *all* the lies he told to Isaac. Dexterous as she was, she was not capable of foreseeing all the auxiliary lies, which the grand practical lie required for its support. Besides, it was not necessary to do so. She had opened a fountain in her son's heart, which, after its first gush, needed no help to furnish a torrent of falsehood, if circumstances required it. Lying, like strife, is like the letting out of water; none can tell where or when it will stop. Perhaps Rebekah herself was shocked, when she heard Jacob prostitute the awful name of JEHOVAH, the God of his

father, to witness his assertions. She had ventured to "lie *for* God," and to her family; but she may not have dreamt even of calling God to witness a lie. It is not necessary to suppose that she intended or foresaw such a pitch of impiety. She could not, however, stop it. Shall I *retract* this assertion? Could she not have burst into Isaac's chamber, when Jacob went further than she taught him, and confessed the whole conspiracy? Now this certainly was not exactly impossible, although highly improbable in her state of mind. But even if she had, Jacob was now desperate, and would most likely have given his mother the lie, whatever she had said: for as *dread* of her had driven him to obey her voice, *hatred* would have soon followed, had she dared to unmask the young liar to his father. As it was, he never *respected* his mother

afterwards. He took her advice, and fled to Haran to save his own life; but he never returned to see her again, nor made any inquiry about her when Esau and he were reconciled; nor even asked his father where her grave was, when he did return to Mamre. Thus Rebekah forfeited the esteem of both her sons.

CHAPTER VI.

MATERNAL INFLUENCE ON JOSEPH.

THE early piety of Joseph, much and often as it is held up to the young as a model, is ~~not~~ made too much of, by either parents or preachers. God himself has given it "a large place" in his Word. It has not, however, been so much traced to Maternal influence, as to Paternal instruction, even although nothing direct is said of either by the sacred historian. But if there be every reason to suppose that Jacob's love to Joseph would not stop at the gift of an embroidered coat, nor at a rebuke for telling dreams too openly, there is equal reason to believe that Rachel, if not beforehand with Jacob in teaching Joseph the grand

maxim of his life—"I fear God,"—went hand in hand with her husband, in training up their boy in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, whilst she was spared to watch over her firstborn ; and she was spared long enough, to acquire a positive and important influence over him. This is the fact, even according to *criticised* chronology. That makes him *seven* years of age, at the death of his mother ; and some think they could prove him to have been nearly as old again. It is not necessary for my purpose, however, to go into this question. Seven years under the care of such a mother as Rachel, aided by such a father as Jacob became after revisiting Bethel and wrestling with the Angel of the Covenant on Peniel, are enough to furnish a rational explanation of Joseph's early piety. And then, he was *so* pious,—such "a lily amongst the thorns" of the great Patriarchal family, that it is impossible

not to feel that the lily of Haran had been often watered with the dew of Heaven, in answer to parental prayer, and as the reward of parental instruction.

In a word, Joseph's piety was not a happy *accident*, but the fruit of "good seed," sown and watered by Jacob and Rachel, when the character of both had ripened by experience, and been sanctified by adversity, and elevated to a high spirituality by the visions at Mahanaim and El-Bethel; for it was amidst holy altars and heavenly visions, that he was taught the fear of God. This fact ought never to be forgotten, either in studying his history, or in commending his example. The history of Jacob and Rachel, also, must be studied with an express reference to Joseph: for their improved piety *began* at his birth. I feel it to be my duty, therefore, to sketch their history anew, or in its bearings upon their *first-*

born as the grand centre of their conjugal solicitude and joy ; and thus to present the *bright* side of Jacob's character as fully as I have the dark.

“How old art thou?” This was the first question put by Pharaoh to Jacob, when the patriarch of Canaan was introduced at the court of Egypt. But before Pharaoh could have perceived the emphasis of that answer, “Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been,” he ought to have known the beauty and the virtues of Rachel : it was the loss of her which gave the chief emphasis to the words “evil days.” The thoughts of the hoary patriarch were, at that moment, straying around “the pillar of Rachel's grave,” and those alone who knew the treasure he had interred there, could participate in his feelings when he answered Pharaoh.

The truth of these remarks will be obvious

to those who have observed, that the loss of Rachel is the only personal calamity which Jacob laments on his death-bed: "And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath, and I buried her there." Thus he referred to that bereavement, even when in the arms of death, with all the tenderness and intenseness of recent sorrow.

And yet the morning of Jacob's life opened calm and lovely. Whilst he dwelt by the Well of Lahai-roi and by the grove in Beer-sheba, he was under the eye of a father whose history and character were equally interesting. Instruction from such a parent must have distilled on Jacob like dew on the tender herb; because Isaac was as one risen from the dead to teach the living; for an actual resurrection from the tomb could hardly have thrown

deeper interest around him than his miraculous escape from the altar on Moriah had done. To his twin-children, the object of such a deliverance must have appeared almost more than human ; and, whilst they saw him in the vigour of health at Beersheba, they would feel as if the voice of the angel were still heard from Moriah, saying, "Lay not thine hand upon Isaac, neither do thou anything unto him." Nor will it be too much to suppose that the son of Abraham, like his pious father, taught his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord, and thus Jacob would grow up under *such* nurture and admonition, rich in knowledge and in enjoyment. Accordingly, even his *faults* prove that he was not ignorant of either the God or the Covenant of his fathers. Indeed, it was his knowledge which gave that aggravation to his treachery and falsehood, which drew down upon him,

eventually, such "vengeance on his inventions." Hence, at Bethel, although the visions there have no parallels in the prior history of the world, either as to mystery or magnificence, Jacob was astonished at nothing but his own insensibility :—"Surely God is in this place, and I knew it not!"

Besides these advantages and endearments, he was his mother's favourite son; and although her fondness led him far astray, still the warmth of maternal affection would naturally add to his happiness, and serve to entwine around the scenery and associates of home, all the best feelings of his heart. Such were his engagements and delights, whilst Jacob dwelt by the grove in Beersheba. But like the verdant foliage of that grove, his enjoyments were but for a season: like an autumnal leaf, he was soon blown off from the parent tree, and driven into the wilderness, lonely and sad,

by a storm of his *own* raising: for although his mother made him a liar, she did not teach him all the lies which made Esau his deadly enemy, and God his chastising father. Under the ban of a brother's curse, and affected by the parting benediction of his weeping parents, he departed on foot to Padan-aram in Mesopotamia, and began to feel those "*evil days*" which he afterwards mentioned to Pharaoh. Scorched by the midday sun, chilled by the cold dews of the night, with a stone for his pillow, and the clouds as his only covering, he must have felt keenly on Bethel, the transition from a chamber to the bare earth; and still more keenly, that he had made home too *hot* for himself by his own misconduct. He arose, however, safe and refreshed from the exposure of the mountain, and addressed himself to his long journey, with the alacrity of the angels which he had seen

on the mystic Ladder, ascending and descending.

Jacob arrived at Padan-aram with strength sufficient to assist Rachel in watering her father's sheep ; but in that state of heart-desolation which makes the feelings cling at once to the first object that smiles kindly ;—so melted down by grief, that the first emotion of joy will be more overpowering than the grief itself had been. Mark this transition, when his lovely cousin was pointed out to him. “Jacob kissed Rachel and lifted up his voice and wept.”—“And she ran and told her father.” Hallowed be their mutual feelings ! This rising interest will ripen into an attachment which will improve both, and form the basis of domestic bliss. Laban received him as so near a relative ought to be welcomed, and between the promises of his uncle and the friendship of his cousin, Jacob was enabled

gradually to reconcile himself to a strange land, and to surmount the grief of banishment. But the selfish Syrian soon threw off the mask of disinterestedness, and made his nephew feel that he was a dependent. Laban made him a hired servant, and even defrauded him of the wages of servitude. Hear his own account of his treatment: "Thus I was: in the day the drought consumed me and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee. I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. Thus have I been twenty years in thy house and thou hast changed my wages ten times." All this, however, Jacob submitted to for the sake of Rachel; her love was the compensation for every loss. And how complete and salutary her influence over him was, will be best told

in the words of Moses : " Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her."

Speaking of Rachel herself, Moses says merely that she " was beautiful and well favoured." But is there not reason to think that the limits of his history imposed this brevity, and that beauty was the least part of Rachel's excellence ? No creature of mere form and complexion could have acquired the ascendancy she did over the son of Isaac ; that character must have been as good as it was lovely, which could fix the heart of Jacob so long ; and that woman " an help meet for him," who during twenty years could assuage the regrets of exile, and sweeten the labour of a shepherd, and smile away the glooms of vexation. You are fully aware how much their mutual love would be heightened when a living son was the fruit of it :—it wanted

only offspring to crown and confirm it for ever, and that pledge was bestowed in the person of Joseph.

From the moment that Rachel was likely to be "the joyful mother of children," Jacob began to think of returning to the land of his fathers, influenced no doubt by its superior advantages as the seat of the patriarchal religion. Now that he had "olive-branches" which he could take delight in training, he seems to have felt that Padan-aram was not a *safe nursery* for them, and the welfare of their souls called for an immediate change of residence. Actuated by this holy motive, and by the natural love of home, he made arrangements with his family, and fled at once from Laban. Behold him again in the wilderness, retracing the steps which, twenty years ago, he had trodden alone; but under what different circumstances! He was then

a young man and a lonely pilgrim, now a tender husband and a fond parent. How much he enjoyed this change, may be judged from his fine exclamation at Mahanaim, when the contrast struck him: "With my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." This improvement in his lot did not, however, impair his piety, but in the true spirit of holy gratitude, he would not mention his greatness until he had acknowledged its author. Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant."

You perceive at once, from this confession, that Jacob had neither lost his piety amongst the idolaters of Mesopotamia, nor his humility in the increase of his rank, but stood as meekly between his "two bands" as when

his "staff" was his only property. And whilst the fear of God was an antidote against pride, its sweet influence improved every social affection of his heart ; establishing a just and beautiful proportion between divine and human love. He would not close his devotional exercise at Mahanaim, until he had committed into the hands of the God of his fathers the whole of his family : " Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children."

In this spirit of paternal solicitude he commenced his pilgrimage, hoping and praying, that he might lead his family to Canaan in peace, and in the bosom of it spend the evening of life, blessing and being blessed.

Full of such animating prospects, he moved forward by gentle stages, paying his vows

as he advanced, and commemorating every deliverance by a pillar or an altar. And the God of his fathers appeared to smile on the Patriarch's hopes during the greater part of the journey. Angels descended to guard him; "the visions of the Almighty" were vouchsafed to encourage him;—Esau was reconciled to him, and on Peniel, he was constituted Prince of Canaan, by the King of kings. "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel." After these honours and covenant promises, what hope was it presumptive to cherish? Who would not have indulged sanguine expectations after such signal tokens of the divine favour, and calculated on spending a succession of happy years in the bosom of a sanctified family? Methinks I see the fond Patriarch in the wilderness, walking by the side of Rachel's camel, and submitting to his beloved partner all his plans

for future life, every one of which sprung from or centred in herself. She was “the angel of the vision,”—the star that was to shed lustre on retirement, and loveliness around the domestic circle in Mamre. Cheered by such anticipations, they journeyed on from Bethel towards Ephrath, intending to stop there, until Rachel, as “a nursing mother,” should be able to resume the pilgrimage. Fond mother! she too had her pleasing dreams of future life, and on the mountains of Rama, no doubt flattered herself with the prospect of Isaac’s benediction;—felt his paternal kiss on her blushing cheek,—and kindled with maternal complacency when she thought of placing Joseph—and *another little stranger*, in the arms of their venerable grandfather. And how probable! for she was but “a little way from Ephrath,” and felt no symptoms of danger. Ah, Rachel! but you are not des-

tined to reach Mamre, you must not walk with Jacob over the scenes of his childhood, Isaac will not embrace you in this world: your children may smile in his arms; but you, the angel of death has prepared the *couch of your confinement* beneath the palm-tree of Rama! And it was so: in vain "the midwife said unto her, Fear not,"—in vain Jacob hung over her in agonizing suspense,—in vain they assured her, "Thou shalt have this son also." She had him, but at the expense of her own life. "As her soul was in departing, (for she died,) she called his name Ben-oni," and in that effort her spirit passed away!

Thus lived and died the lovely Rachel, thus was the desire of Jacob's eyes taken away with a stroke. And you can better imagine than I can portray the pangs of the bereaved Patriarch, at this awful moment, whilst gazing on a motherless infant and a lifeless spouse.

His domestic happiness was overthrown. Leah he never had loved, never pretended to love, and the stratagem by which she was forced upon him, was such an *outrage* on nature, that his heart was not likely to forget the share she had in the treachery. Dinah, his only daughter, had been violated in Shechem. Simeon and Levi, his sons, were stained with the blood of Hamor ; and except Joseph and Benjamin, Jacob had not one left in his own household on whom his eye could repose with unmixed delight. Leah was indeed alive and his wife, but she was not " an help meet for him ;" for although he was *trepanned* into the polygamy and concubinage of Mesopotamia, he seems to have hated the customs of the country, and to have been one who, if left to act for himself, would have adopted the maxim, " Rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant

roe ; let her breasts satisfy thee ; and be thou ravished always with her love." Such a wife he had found in Rachel ; and now she was gone to return no more, until the heavens and the earth are no more, and with her the very pillar of his domestic comfort.

All his fairest and fondest designs of improving and beautifying Mamre had originated on her account ;—she was to be the chief corner-stone in the fabric of his earthly happiness ; her children were to be the heirs of the Abrahamic covenant, and to transmit the line of the King of kings to posterity ; and if this latter hope was not cut off by her untimely death—his other plans would either be abandoned as insipid, now that she could not share them, or carried into effect only because she had suggested them. Except the melancholy pleasure of filling up the outlines which she had sketched in his company,

the pillar of Rachel's grave crushed beneath it the bright creations of many a sanguine hour!

How soothing to a heart thus widowed of its chief delight, thus weighed down by speechless grief, that he could not charge himself with any unkindness or inattention to Rachel, whilst she lived! He had, indeed, exposed her by a long journey from Padan to Rama; but that was rendered unavoidable by the baseness of Laban, and prescribed by God himself. Besides, no one was more prepared to mitigate the fatigues of such a pilgrimage, than a man who had been accustomed "to gather lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that were with young." Hear his own words: "I will lead on softly, according as the children may be able to endure." Such stages could hardly endanger Rachel; and that they were not the cause of her death, nor seriously hurtful to her general

health, is evident from the hopes of the nurse and from the life of the infant. The fact seems to be, that Jacob needed some weighty *ballast* to keep him steady, after his sails had been so filled by the kindness of Esau, and by the celestial winds from Bethel and Peniel. Besides, the retributive providence of God had not settled all its account with him for the sins of his youth. It therefore began its chief discipline, when his piety was best able to understand and endure "vengeance on his inventions." This is the real secret of his bereavement on the way to Ephrath.

I have tried to make this picture somewhat vivid, that you may have clearly before you all the conjugal love which Joseph saw between Jacob and Rachel, and all the parental love which, like the wings of the cherubim upon the mercy-seat, met over his cradle in Haran, and over his head as he "bowed" to

his uncle Esau, at his mother's side at Peniel, and over his chair at Succoth and Shechem, as he sat by their side, and over his spirit at El Bethel, when he bowed with all the family in the worship of the God of their fathers. Now this is not too picturesque a view of the case. His parents did love him and each other thus ; and Joseph was old enough, before they went to Bethel to bury the Teraphim of Laban and rebuild the altar of Jehovah, to understand something of both their love and piety. Besides, the whole scene at Bethel was calculated to interest and affect an intelligent boy, which he evidently was. Almost any boy, of even *five* years of age, and he was at least seven, would have been a

“ Little busy bee”

under the oak of Shechem, when his father began to dig a pit for the Syrian idols ; and

as they were but small idols, and could hardly be beautiful workmanship in that early age of the world, even if they were of precious metal, throwing some of them into the pit, and stamping on the earth which covered them, would just suit the taste of a sprightly boy. Indeed he would be the busiest and the foremost of all the party at such work, in his own way. In like manner Joseph could not fail to mark his father's emotion, and his mother's sympathy, and nurse Deborah's delight, when Jacob knelt down upon the very spot where the vision of the mystic ladder had made his sleep sweet in the days of old,—and where he had anointed the pillar and vowed the vow, when his “staff” was his only wealth, and God his only friend; for Rachel would share so deeply all the feelings of Jacob, on seeing a spot of which she had so often heard and dreamt in Haran, that no boy could

have witnessed, unmoved, the tears, or the looks, or the tones of joy and gratitude, which such an occasion called forth from his parents. And when his father began to build again the altar of Jehovah, saying, "Unto God who answered me in the day of my *distress*, and was with me in the way I went," instead of saying, "unto the God of Abraham and Isaac;"—that thus he might concentrate the thoughts of his children upon Jehovah as his *own* God, Joseph was sure to be a *curious* observer, at least, and Rachel a ready interpreter, of this solemn transaction; for all her domestic happiness had originated in the principles and hopes which Jacob had acquired when he first slept and worshipped upon that altar-stone, as he went to see and seek her at Padan-aram.

There was also another event occurred at this time, which Joseph had never seen before.

Good old nurse Deborah died, just after the solemnities at Bethel finished. God did not spare her to see her old master Isaac again ; but he did not call her home until she had seen her master's son restored to sweet fellowship with the God of Abraham and Isaac ; and the whole family reconciled again ; and the very spot where the way from earth to heaven had been first symbolized by a ladder, with angels on all its steps, and Jehovah at its summit. All this was a fine sight for the venerable matron, after all the vicissitudes which she had witnessed and shared in the Abrahamic family ; and it must have had a fine influence upon her dying hours. Now, Joseph was not likely to be altogether excluded from the sight of her death-bed. Judging from the custom of the times, he was most likely taken there, to hear her last words, and share in her dying benediction. This would

be an impressive scene to a susceptible boy, who had never witnessed death before : for although Joseph was old enough to have seen the Shechemites and Hamorites, whom Simeon and Levi slew to avenge Dinah, that was a sight his parents would naturally keep from him. They would, however, as naturally take him to see Deborah. At least he was sure to witness her burial, under the oak at Allon-bachuth ; and the *first* funeral which a boy sees absorbs him far more than is usually supposed. I have often wished, whilst burying, whether the old or the young, that I could feel all the deep interest in the solemnity, which beams on the face, and burns in the eye, of the little folks who crowd around an open grave, and lean over its brink, and drop by stealth a lump of earth upon the coffin-lid. It is therefore not imagining at all, nor supposing too much, to take for granted that young

Joseph took a deep interest in Deborah's burial, and interest of another kind than that which the interment of the Teraphim awakened. He saw *them* flung or dashed into the pit with contempt and indignation, on the part of his parents; and, no doubt, imitated both as far as he could, in spurning the vile images, which his father's God had denounced. But when Deborah's grave was dug, and her body lowered into it, and the green turf replaced over it under the oak of Bethel, he saw his father both a solemn and sad man, and his mother weeping, and all the family silent; and thus he must have felt a new class of emotions, which, however indefinite, were strong, and could not have been either useless or momentary, especially as they were soon deepened and confirmed by the death of his own sweet mother. Looking, indeed, at Deborah's grave as a *link* in the chain of Providence towards

Joseph, it was evidently *timed* by God to prepare the boy for "The pillar of Rachel's grave;" God thus calling him to the funeral of an aged saint, who died in peace, before leaving him motherless; for the Shepherd of Israel tempers the wind, not only to "the shorn lamb," but also to the lambs about to be shorn!

I purposely took no notice of young Joseph when I sketched the sad scene which occurred "but a little way from Ephrath," because I wished to familiarize you first with the history of his boyhood at Succoth, Shechem, and Bethel, that you might have no doubts about what he must have felt at Rama, when he gained a little brother at the heavy expense of losing a fond, tender, and devoted mother. And now you feel that his mother's last shriek, "*Be-noni!*" and his brother's first cries, in the tent at Rama, could not have been heard without

strong emotion by the wondering and weeping boy outside. Had he been much younger than he was, his little heart must have throbbed and thrilled, and his young blood run cold, when he was brought into the tent to his speechless father, and saw her eyes closed—her lips sealed—her hands motionless—who was wont to meet and greet him with open arms, speaking eyes, and fond welcomes. Even the *baby* could not have diverted his attention at that moment, volatile as boyhood is, and rapid as the transitions of the young mind from grief to joy often are ; for his father too would seem more *dead* than alive, and be utterly unable to give him either comfort or explanation. It is hardly necessary to be a parent, in order to feel the truth of these hints. You can see the boy's face,—now buried in his father's bosom,—and anon in his mother's bier ; now hanging over her closed lips, and

yet shrinking from kissing them again, because they felt so cold and clammy,—and anon almost afraid to kiss his father, lest *his* face too should feel as strange! No boy could be thus placed without learning, as well as feeling, much that he could never forget. True, there were other boys saw Rachel after her death, and were no better for it; but she was not *their* mother.

His mother's funeral also would as naturally make a deep impression upon Joseph. I have often thought that the "commandment concerning his own bones," which he gave before he died, to the Jews in Egypt, is a striking proof and illustration, not only of his faith in the covenant of promise, but also of his vivid recollections of his mother's grave. "The pillar of Rachel's grave" was dearer and holier to him than all the PYRAMIDS of Egypt. He preferred to lie buried with or

near his mother, to lying in state with the Pharaohs. We know this to be the fact; and therefore are warranted to believe that he was all eye and ear, whilst his father was giving directions for Rachel's interment—and superintending the digging of her grave—and searching amongst the “grey stones” at Rama for a suitable pillar—and performing the rites of sepulture—and improving the whole solemnity to the family. Next to his father, Joseph was the most deeply interested party in all this; and as it was done with far more pains and care than were bestowed upon the funeral of Deborah under the oak of Bethel, carefully as that was conducted, we can hardly mistake the influence of the whole scene upon him.

Now such was the boy we meet in “a coat of many colours” at Canaan, dreaming prophetic dreams, and thinking *aloud* about them,

and obeying his father in all things, and visiting his angry brothers in the wilderness of Dothan without grudging, fear, or suspicion. These were the scenes of worship and woe he had witnessed, before he saw the deathbed and grave of his grandfather Isaac at Hebron, or sat down by his father's side alone to hear of God or the covenant of his fathers. Thus you see the *prepared* soil in which Jacob sowed the good seed of holy principles, in the case of Joseph. If, therefore, none of his other children were to compare with Joseph, the reason is obvious,—none of them had enjoyed such maternal “watch and ward” as Rachel kept over him. Her influence would indeed have soon been defeated, had not Jacob followed it up by his own exertions and example; which he evidently did: but even for this, Joseph was not a little indebted to his mother. Her memory and example had much influence upon

Jacob. Even when old, and blind, and dying, he told the sad tale of her death with a touching eloquence which goes to the heart at once. (Gen. xlviii. 7.) "As for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath : and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath ; the same is Bethlehem."

The history of Joseph is so familiar, that it is not necessary for me to analyse his character, or to illustrate his principles, in order to show the influence of his religious education. It is enough to say, that at every step from the pit in the wilderness of Dothan, to the second chariot of the Pharaohs, and whether in prisons or palaces, he exemplified and verified his maxim,—“I fear God.” Teach this maxim, and just as it *stands* in Scripture. It is a “form of sound words,” which no maxim of

the New Testament sets aside. "The fear of the Lord is the *beginning* of wisdom," under the new covenant, as much and truly as it was under either the old or the Abrahamic covenant. Your own God-fearing disposition is the best proof you have of being "born again of the Spirit." You knew nothing experimentally of either the witness or the work of the Holy Spirit, until you began to fear God. Expect not therefore that the Spirit will be poured out on your offspring according to a different rule. The promise is the same, "unto you and your children." Teach them then what you know best, the fear of God; and thus place them in a right position and relation to the grand rule of the divine procedure,—“Unto you that FEAR my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with *healing* in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up.” (Mal. iv. 2.)

CHAPTER VII.

MATERNAL INFLUENCE ON MOSES.

It is not by accident, nor from oversight, that the Scriptures do not furnish us with specific memoirs of either men of business, or of merely domestic men, even although the great bulk of mankind ever have been, and ever must be, occupied with the *ordinary* affairs of life, and both tried and tempted by the vicissitudes of trade, commerce, and agriculture. At first sight, this omission seems a defect, in a Revelation which teaches by example as well as precept, and which is intended to guide every man in all classes of society, and in all kinds of employment. This apparent defect is however a real excellence, and a glorious

proof of the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures ; for were they not "the oracles of God," they would have contained some lives of merchants, farmers, and tradesmen, as well as of kings, legislators, prophets, and Apostles. Uninspired writers would, to a certainty, have selected some examples from both active and private life, in order to illustrate and commend the general principles of a religion which claimed the faith and obedience of the world at large. In the Scriptures however, although we have many distinct references to private individuals, and even some clear glimpses of both commercial and agricultural characters, yet all the full-length portraits are those of *great public* characters in the church or the state.

Civil history, I am aware, resembles sacred in this respect, and gives the lives of distinguished men only. But for a very different reason ! Our historians are respecters of per-

sons ; but God is “ no respecter of persons.” He is the father of the spirits of all flesh ; and as He willeth not the death of sinners, but hath pleasure in showing mercy and bestowing salvation, that He may bring many sons to glory, He teacheth all men the same principles, that He may train them for the same immortality. God therefore, in selecting Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, Job, and Paul, as exemplifications of what He means by piety, and as specimens of what His children should be, tells the whole family of mankind that, *inspiration* excepted, He is both ready and willing to bestow upon any man the same grace and glory which he gave to them. Thus, it is not to place ordinary men *beneath* extraordinary, that only the lives of the latter are narrated with graphic fulness in sacred history ; much less is it to pay compliments to either rank or office ; but to make all men see

and feel, that, in reference to salvation and immortality, high and low, rich and poor, public and private men, are upon a *level*—not only in comparison with God, and before God, but on a level as to their need of His grace, and as to their welcome to apply for and expect grace at His paternal hands. Society is as much diversified in rank, talent, wealth, and pursuit, as is the Earth on which they dwell in surface and aspect ; but the glorious Gospel of the grace of God abolishes all these distinctions before the mercy-seat and the cross, according to the prediction of Isaiah : “ Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain made low, that all flesh may see *together* the salvation of God.”

Another reason for selecting no leading examples of piety from ordinary life, is, that it is somehow natural to us to look *above* our own rank for precedents, and to imitate our

superiors ; and it is equally natural, and as customary, for the great to overlook or despise the example of plain Christians. I have often felt quite at a loss to determine, when thinking of this fact, whether it was most in *pity* to the weakness of men in ordinary life, or to the waywardness of men in high life, that God made Moses and David such prominent figures in the "great cloud of witnesses" which attest and illustrate the worth of personal piety. Perhaps both classes alike needed this selection of exemplars ; the former liking to look *up*, and the latter disliking to look *down*, for instruction.

We may thus see also the wisdom, and kindness, and condescension of God, in selecting chiefly men of real genius, or of commanding talent, to be His prophets and apostles ; for nothing is so wayward, punctilious, or capricious as *conscious* talent and taste, whilst

not under the control of an enlightened and tender conscience. The young especially, if acute or sprightly, look much to originality and grasp of mind ; and all intelligent men lay great stress upon intellectual power. Accordingly, God has taken special care that no man, whatever be his genius or judgment, can think meanly of either the Prophets or the Apostles as teachers, however much he may dislike or despise what they teach. Even science cannot prove Moses to be a sciolist, nor criticism disprove the sublimity of Isaiah's prophetic odes, or the beauty of David's penitential Psalms. Milton invoked the Muse of the Prophets, and Shakspeare paid homage to their grand theme. Newton's telescopic eye gazed often and intently upon their mystic stars, and Handel's loftiest music was at once derived from and devoted to their loftier poetry. Whoever therefore would assail the

sacred writers, as if they were mindless or unmanly characters, must disown the master-spirits of the world, and brand himself a fool or a witling.

Mothers! the Father of lights, in shedding supernatural illumination upon commanding intellects, consulted the welfare of your sons, and prepared for your use an unanswerable argument against all the pretences of sceptics or scorers to mental greatness. You can challenge the ranks of both philosophers and poets for either rivals or equals in genius to Moses, David, and Isaiah. And you ought to manifest in your family, admiration of the talents and taste, as well as of the piety and inspiration, of the prophets; for they would have been the master-spirits of their times, by their innate powers, even if they had not been inspired. Moses would have made himself a legislator in Egypt, or wherever he had dwelt, even if

he had been an idolater ; and the harps of David and Isaiah would have produced deathless lyrics or epics, had they been strung only to the themes of Homer and Virgil.

But the great reason for selecting such men, and giving prominence to their history, instead of that of ordinary men, is to prove to all men, that they must be entire debtors to the mercy and grace of God for salvation and eternal life. For if any man could have been independent of grace, or able to do without Divine aid, Moses would have been the man. He was constitutionally meek, moral, and prudent. The glare of a court could not fascinate him, nor the mutiny of a camp unman him. The crown of Egypt could not bribe him, nor the threatenings of his own nation bend him. He could alike defy danger, and forget insult. And yet, this noble and consistent man, with childlike simplicity, looked habitually to God

for direction, and leaned with self-renouncing and self-condemning humility upon the grace of God. There is as much penitential *begging* for mercy in his prayers, as in the cry of the publican in the temple, or of the thief on the cross. He had no confidence in himself, either for the work of time, or for the rewards of eternity.

It is worth while to look into this characteristic of Moses' spirit, because the origin of his humility, as well as that of all his best principles, can be traced only to maternal influence. No other human means seem to have been employed or blessed by the Spirit of God, for the formation of the character of Moses, from youth up to manhood.

This fact does not strike a cursory reader of the sacred narrative ; nor can you see it to be a fact, whilst you have only a general idea of his history floating in your memory. The

prayers of Moses, as they are recollected and quoted on ordinary occasions, are so suitable to his circumstances, that we think only of their appropriateness, without ever asking who *taught* him to "pray with the understanding" in the first instance. If, however, you will study with me only one of his special prayers, and mark how much it implies, you will soon both discover and feel that he must have begun to pray with clasped hands at his mother's knee. I say, at his *mother's* knee; for his father was not likely to have had any access to the court of Pharaoh, or to the palace of Pharaoh's daughter.

Take, then, that prayer, "Now I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find (more) grace in thy sight. If thy *presence* go not with me, carry us not up hence." (Exod. xxxiii. 13.) Here, his final object

is evidently to obtain grace enough to enable him to lead the church wisely and safely through the wilderness of Canaan. Now, as he had never even heard of grace, nor of the Divine presence, from any of the Magi in the court or colleges of Egypt; and as he had shown as soon as he came of age, or when he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, that he preferred the reproach of Christ to the treasures of Egypt; and soon after, that he could "endure as seeing Him who is invisible,"—it is self-evident that, in thus pleading for more grace, and appealing to former communications of grace, he was throwing himself back upon *all* his past experience of the Divine favour and presence; and thus he throws us back upon a period when no one who knew anything of either grace from, or communion with, God, had any access to him, but his pious mother.

Whoever would evade this conclusion, by saying that some one else *may* have trained him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, or even by saying that he was "taught of God," must involve himself in far greater difficulties than any which may seem involved in the supposition that his mother was God's first messenger to him. For we do know both her name and her faith ; whereas we can neither characterize nor name any man, in all the house of bondage, but his father, who was capable of teaching Moses the things which belonged to his eternal peace ; and his father, as we have seen, was not likely to have had much, if any, access to him. And as to his being taught directly by God, or without the instrumentality and medium of human means, it is enough to say, that we have no such account of his conversion in Scripture, or from tradition. Besides, Paul says expressly that

it was "by *faith*" Moses did all he did, when he counted all things but loss, that he might win Christ, and lay hold upon eternal life. Now, whatever some may mean by faith, Paul always means by it the cordial belief of God's testimony concerning the Saviour. Unless, therefore, we could find some *revelation* made to Moses before he preferred the reproach of Christ to the Egyptian crown,—and there is not a word nor a hint of any personal voice or vision being vouchsafed to him before he showed his faith by his works, we are bound, by a regard to both truth and consistency, to believe that his faith, like that of Timothy, "dwelt first in his mother," or that from a child he had known, through her, the Abrahamic covenant, which although not Scripture then, was able to make him wise unto salvation, through faith that was in Christ Jesus. Indeed, it would not be going

beyond either probability or fact to specify the great general truths which his mother taught him, although the Scriptures do not contain a single line upon the subject of his religious education. God is a God of order, and does nothing unnecessary, either in teaching or helping men. Accordingly, when He first appeared and spoke to Moses by special vision at the burning bush in the desert of Midian, he began the revelation by an appeal to what Moses evidently knew beforehand; saying, "I am the God of thy *father*;" thus touching first that very chord of his heart which his pious mother was sure to tune first; for as her husband Amraim was a pious man, and a partaker of like precious faith with herself, she would naturally begin the education of her boy, by trying to endear to him the God of his father. This in fact was the first lesson in all patriarchal families; and

it was an emphatic one in the family of Amram, for whom God had done such great things, from the moment that Amram and Jochebed rose, by faith, superior to the fear of Pharaoh's wrath, and hid their child three months, and then ventured to cast him on the care of Providence in a cradle of bulrushes. Any mother whose husband had shown such faith in God, and such solicitude for her beautiful boy, would have told that *miracle-preserved* boy, of his father's God, from the moment he could understand anything good, and even been impatient for the moment when she might begin the sweet lesson. And a sweet lesson it must have been to little Moses, when his holy and fond mother took him, as she naturally would as soon as possible, first to the spot on the banks of the Nile, where, with his father's consent, he was committed to Providence on the waters; and then to the

spot where he was taken out of the river again, a safe, although a weeping babe.

Often, no doubt, she walked out with him, now in her arms, and anon in her hand, along that memorable bank of the Nile, telling him, each time, "There your father's God was a father to you, my dear boy!" This, or something very like this, laid such hold upon the heart of Moses in early life, that, when he wrote the Exodus in his old age, he was so full of his mother's memory, that he gave her *all* the credit and honour of protecting his infancy. Not, however, that he forgot his father or his sister, but that he remembered his mother best, from having been most with her, and from knowing that she had, as he says, "hid him three months, and when she could no longer hide him, that she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and pitch, and put the child therein,

and laid it in the flags by the river's brink." (Exod. ii. 1, 2, 3.) All this was mother's-work, and what no fond mother would let out of her own hands even to a fond father; although of course Jochebed would do it with the more care and pleasure, because she had Amram's sanction and smile to cheer her perilous "labour of love." Indeed, without his faith to fortify her own, at such an emergency, she would hardly have ventured on such an experiment; and without his sanction, she would have done wrong to try it. There is therefore much implied compliment to his father's love, wisdom, and faith, in the narrative of the event, although Moses ascribes all the credit of the plan and the proceedings on his behalf to his mother. Besides, he soon after proved, in writing the Exodus, that he had not forgotten nor underrated his father. God had said first, at the bush in Midian, "I am the God

of thy father;" and Moses placed that assurance first in writing the history of the Sheekinal vision, although it placed his father *before* Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Did you ever observe this fact? God added, "I am the God ~~of~~ Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." These were great and venerable names in the estimation of Moses; but as Jehovah had called himself Amram's God *first*, Amram's son gave his father all the honour which Jehovah condescended to give him, and allowed no national veneration, even for the heads of his people, to give an artificial direction to his filial love, or to the flow of natural affection.

But the beauty of the revelation at the bush in Midian lies in the touching fact, that God's first words to Moses,—“The God of thy father,”—are just the first words which Jochebed had taught him on her knee. God's account

of himself is just what her account of him had been. And this explains to us the *collectedness* of Moses in speaking so freely to God during the long interview in the wilderness; for although "he was afraid to look upon God," and even "hid his face," he was not afraid to speak unto him, nor even to reason with him. Now, no *natural* explanation can be given of this holy familiarity, or humble boldness, but on the principle, that God's first assurance to him touched the first and sweetest chord of religious feeling, which his mother had strung and tuned in his heart. Thus as Mary soon exclaimed in the garden of the Sepulchre, "Rabboni," when Jesus said in his wonted tone of tenderness, "Mary!" so Moses was soon *himself* again, after the consternation created by the "great sight," when Jehovah said, "I am the God of thy father." Besides, this is just the way in which God

removed the fears of Isaac and Jacob, when He began to reveal himself to them. He appealed first to what they had been *taught* concerning Him at home, in childhood. "I am the God of Abraham, thy father; fear not," He said to Isaac:—the very truth, you see, which Sarah was sure to have *begun* with, in teaching her boy the elements of patriarchal religion. In the same manner, He introduced himself to Jacob, as the God of his father Isaac, and evidently for the same purpose; that he might gain Jacob's confidence at once, by appealing to, and confirming maternal testimony. I say, maternal, not to the exclusion or the eclipse of paternal testimony, but because Isaac, Jacob, and Moses were most in their mother's company at first, and because each of them maintained all through life a strong attachment to their respective mothers, and because their mothers had great influence

over them. Now this could not have been the case, had not their mothers taken some pains in their religious education, as well as in their personal comfort.

This is a feature in sacred biography, which like the fine veins of rich marble or oriental pebbles, can only be brought to light fully by patient labour. It does not lie, like colours in a flower, nor like light in a star, on the surface. As, however, the lapidary does not grudge the labour of polishing, nor the astronomer the expense of the telescope which brings the *belts* of Jupiter and the *ring* of Saturn into sight, neither do I grudge the labour of working out the *latent* features of maternal influence, which enrich the biographical gems of Scripture; but which pious mothers are too modest to look for, and too timid to mention of their own accord.

In the meantime, however, I must not

forget, that we are now within sight of another wise and weighty reason for the selection of such men as Moses to be the leading examples to all men, namely, because the parents of such men, and especially their mothers, acquired great influence *over* them, by taking a deep interest in them. God thus adhered to both the letter and the spirit of the Abrahamic covenant, and took most pains with those descendants of Abraham whose parents took most pains with them.

There is not to parents a more instructive fact than this, within the compass of the Holy Scriptures, although, perhaps, few practical facts are more overlooked or forgotten. Look at it: the space occupied in the Bible by the history of Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, and David is very large indeed, and might have been occupied with revelations of *more* of the mysteries and glories of the

Divine character and the invisible world ; with fuller explanations of the origin of society and the entrance of sin ; with clearer developments of the principles of moral and mediatorial government, and with more minute predictions of future events. You can easily conceive of a thousand things concerning God and eternity, duty and salvation, which curiosity, and perhaps even better feelings, would have *preferred* to the history of those men, interesting as it is, and instructive as it may be. And yet, that history God preferred to all the *possible* truth he could have added to the sum of revealed truth. Yes ; He gave more space to the history of a few men, who had pious parents, than to the description of His own character, nature, and kingdom ! This is an amazing fact, although quite capable of a satisfactory explanation. It is not fully explained however by saying,

that as Moses was the founder of a national dispensation of religion, and David the author of psalms for the universal church of all ages, until the end of time, it was thus only fair and proper that we should know well the men who were thus made the grand teachers of the church, until the Sun of Righteousness himself arose with healing in his wings. This is true; but it is not all the truth on the subject. In like manner, it is true, as we have already seen, that Moses and David were men who cannot be suspected of imbecility, fanaticism, or fatuity. Their tears cannot be ascribed to weakness nor cowardice; nor their faith to fancy; nor their humility to meekness of spirit; nor their crying for mercy and grace, to a pusillanimous or a timid spirit. Both the joys and sorrows of personal piety, even when at the height, are but sober realities, like light

in a diamond, in their strong minds. He is the *weak* man who is ashamed to weep like David, or to pray like Moses, before the thrice-holy Jehovah! This also is a good reason for giving great prominence to the men who were the leaders of the praise and ordinances of the Jewish church. But even this does not complete the explanation of their being selected by God to be the leaders of that church, and examples to the Christian church also.

Moses and David were men trained from boyhood by their parents, in the principles of the Abrahamic covenant, on which the Jewish church was founded. God was therefore, in choosing Moses to be the legislator, and David to be the minstrel of that church, putting honour, not merely upon their piety, but also upon the parental piety which, like Abraham's, watched over their

opening minds in childhood, and over their character in youth. Their father's prayers and their mother's counsels, and the family discipline at home, were amongst God's *practical* reasons, both for calling them to high offices, and for setting them "in a large room," in the temple of revelation. And these reasons were worthy of God to act upon. The economy of His grace has always been, "The promise is unto you, and to your children;" and therefore He has always done most for the children who have been best trained in the faith of His covenant. Slothful parents, half-hearted parents, and compromising parents, as to parental duty, may speculate and juggle as they will with human theories of sovereignty; but the Divine procedure goes on, with godlike consistency and firmness, to frown upon neglect and presumption, and to smile eventually upon

all bringing up of children which is really
 “*in* the nurture and admonition of the
 LORD.”

Thus they do not see but half what God intended to show in the long and minute history of Moses, who do not look at his mother's influence upon the formation of his principles and character, whilst he was the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter. That prudent, watchful and holy mother, evidently was to him in the Egyptian court, almost what the pillar of cloud and fire was to him in the waves of the Red Sea, and in the wilderness,—both his guide and guardian. And

“*Alone* she did it!”

for neither history nor any tradition points to any other teacher of his religion but herself; and both fancy and conjecture search all

“ the house of bondage” in vain for any master to young Moses, except they choose his father ; and he seems to have had Aaron and Miriam under his charge.

CHAPTER VIII.

MATERNAL INFLUENCE ON SAMUEL.

OLD Bishop Hall says of Samuel, "He began his acquaintance with God early, and continued it long. He began it in his *long* coats, and continued it to his *grey* hairs. He judged Israel all the days of his life."

It is hardly possible to imagine, even, a finer character than Samuel. No public nor private man of his times was equal to him. Nathan, as a prophet, was his equal in fidelity, but not in zeal or daring. It was easier to say to David, "Thou art the man," than to Saul, "Thou hast dealt foolishly; for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over

Israel." Samuel laid his hand upon a lion's mane when he laid hold on Saul's mantle, and rent it, saying, "The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day."

As a judge also Samuel was indefatigable and incorruptible. "He went from year to year, in circuit, to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpeh," as regularly as the sun through the signs of the zodiac; and administered justice at Ramah, "where was his house and altar," as impartially as the sun dispensed light and heat upon that circuit. Accordingly, he could appeal unto all Israel at the close of his *judicial* life thus: "I am old and grey-headed, and I have walked before you from my *childhood* unto this day. Behold, here I am! Witness against me before the Lord, and before His anointed (Saul): whose ox have I taken; or whose ass have I taken; or whom have I defrauded; or whom have I oppressed;

or of whose hand have taken a bribe to blind my eyes therewith? and I will restore it you. And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken *aught* of any man's hand. And they answered, The Lord is witness!" This appeal was made in the presence of the newly anointed king, and Samuel made it tell *upon* Saul as well as *for* himself, thus: "The Lord's anointed is witness that ye have not found aught in my hand." What a crown of glory "grey hairs" were, on such a righteous man! The crown of gold on the head of Saul, however burnished or embossed, had no such splendour. Samuel's integrity was purer than fine gold, and his disinterestedness brighter than gems. The old man stood before the throne, as the little boy had done before the altar, "in the beauty of holiness." His ermine as a judge in Israel was as spotless when he laid it aside,

in order to give place to a king, as his linen ephod was when he first put it on to minister before the Lord in the temple.

Such was Samuel ! And what mother would not rather see " the son of her vows " pass as unspotted through the world as Samuel, whether in public or private life, than see him a Bacon, without integrity ; or a Newton, without impartiality ; or a Milton, without spirituality ; or a Franklin, without a creed ?

Samuel owed, under God, everything he became to his judicious, holy, prayerful, and fond mother. He owed to her instrumentality even his *inspiration* as a prophet. For had not she filled his young spirit with the history of her own vows, prayers, sorrows, and joys, on both her own and his account, his spirit would have been unfit for the kind of inspiration which was given during the theocracy by Judges. The prophets then were rather

family than national ministers of God. Hence Samuel himself says, "The word of the Lord was precious in these days: there was no open vision:" or, no public discoveries of either the day of Christ or the latter day glory. The messages of God were chiefly to individual families, then, and regarded every-day duty rather than future events or great general principles.

It is no conjecture, that Samuel was his mother's *pupil* whilst he was Eli's assistant in the Tabernacle. It is quite certain that she taught him far more than the high priest did, and much better, although she was only a short time with him, once a year, when she came up to Shiloh at the annual sacrifice. Accordingly, whilst he quotes only a few sayings of Eli's, he records at full length the vows, prayers, and song of thanksgiving which his mother offered to God for him.

This is more than David did, fond as he was of his mother, and often as he refers to her devotional character.

Did you ever observe that the *first* use which Samuel made of the pen of inspiration, was to immortalize his father and mother? "The spirit of the prophets" was so far "subject to the prophets," that they could pay a well-deserved compliment to a parent or a friend, even when writing some of the grandest revelations of heaven. In like manner, the Apostles also were allowed to salute their friends by name, at the close of their epistles. Paul, indeed, introduces Eunice and Lois at the beginning of one; and John, Gaius and Demetrius in the body of another. The Gospel of Luke and the Acts are dedicated to the "most excellent Theophilus." These are interesting facts in the annals of inspiration; but not so *touching* as the fact, that Samuel

availed himself of the prophets' discretionary power, to do honour to his venerable father, and to immortalize his amiable mother : Elkanah can never be forgotten, and Hannah will be "*held* in everlasting remembrance," by all the readers of the Old Testament, until the end of time.

This is a delightful fact ! You remember, of course, that the first chapter, and a good part of the second, of the book of Samuel, are devoted to the history and character of his parents. So dear was everything connected with their hallowed memory to him, that he begins by naming the very house where they dwelt, and the hill where it stood, as well as the ancestors of the family : " Now there was a certain man of *Ramathaim-zophim*, of mount *Ephraim*, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite." (1 Sam. i.

1.) This is very fine, and *so* natural! He had left home very young; indeed, as soon as he was fit to be removed to the service of the Tabernacle in Shiloh: but not before he had noticed his native place. The image of both the house and the hill followed him to the altar, and mingled with the visions of prophecy. Why? It was the image of HOME! It was enshrined and endeared also by recollections of the maternal love of his parents. With what *zest* he tells how his father loved his mother! Elkanah "loved Hannah, and gave her a worthy portion." Samuel must have *seen* this conjugal love, as well as been told of it. His mother, however, must have told him more than he had the opportunity of seeing. It was thus he was able to tell us of a *domestic* scene which took place before he was born, when Hannah, although very dear to her husband, was not happy. "She wept,

and did not eat. Then Elkanah, her husband, said unto her, Hannah, *why* weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? Am not I better to thee than ten sons?" Only his mother could have told Samuel this. And how *well* she must have told it, before he could have preserved the very letter and spirit of it so fully! She must have *delighted* to tell her son of his father's delicate regard to her feelings, and of his uniform tenderness as a husband. She did *right* in thus acquainting her boy with the place she held, from the first, in the love and esteem of his father: it was the best way of suggesting to him, the weight of her claims upon his own heart. It was also the direct way of endearing his father to him. Elkanah deserved to be held up to his son as a kind husband, as well as a pious father. He was both; and Samuel knew it; and Hannah

must have told him. How else could Samuel have told us so much about Elkanah's virtues at home, and of his annual visits to the tabernacle? The good man was not likely to pay such compliments to himself. She took care, however, that her son should know well how regularly his father appeared before the Lord in Shiloh, and why she did not accompany him for a time.

Did you ever observe how minutely she must have explained to her boy, her reasons for staying at home whilst she was "a nursing mother"? She did not leave him to guess, nor to overlook her absence; but told him, word for word, what she had said to his father on the occasion. And Samuel remembered her explanations, word for word. "Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child is weaned; and then I will bring him, that he

may appear before the Lord, and there abide for ever.' Thus she proved to him that nothing but a regard to his good, and the glory of God, kept her at home, when the rest of the family went up to pay their vows and offer sacrifice.

How old Samuel was when his mother told him all these things, is uncertain. We do not know either, how many of these lessons were taught at home. Some of them may have been given after he was placed under the care of Eli. It is evident, however, that Samuel was more than "a weaned child," in our sense of the words, when he was taken to Shiloh; for "he worshipped the Lord" on the very day he was presented to Eli. (1 Sam. i. 28.) He also "ministered unto the Lord before Eli," immediately after his parents returned to Ramah. (Ibid. ii. 11.) Josephus says that he was *twelve* years old when the Lord called

him to prophecy. These circumstances enable us to understand how he knew so well all that his mother did, and said, and sang, when she dedicated him to the public service of God. The whole solemnity of his consecration evidently made a deep impression upon his mind, young as he was. He not only noticed that three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, were presented at the time, but also that "one bullock was *slain*," before he could be admitted into the sanctuary. In like manner, he noticed every word his mother said, when she presented him as "a living sacrifice" at the altar. "She said to Eli, O my Lord, as thy soul liveth, my Lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here praying unto the Lord. For this child, I prayed ; and the Lord gave my petition which I asked of him. Therefore also have I lent him unto the Lord : as long as he liveth he

shall be lent unto the Lord." Thus, as it was said of Samuel's own words as a prophet, that none of them were "let fall to the ground," so he let none of his mother's words be lost. He saw and felt that all her soul was in them; that they were all on his account; that she attached infinite importance to his consecration; and therefore he pondered and hid them in his heart. No wonder! They are equally the words of a mother and of a saint, they breathe alike maternal and divine love, and are as true to nature as to grace. They made him feel that her heart was as warm when she gave him up to God, as when she first clasped him to her bosom as the gift of God in answer to prayer.

It is this fine blending of natural and holy love in the counsels, wishes, and prayers of a pious mother, which makes her words distil as the dew, and yet fix themselves like "nails

in a sure place." Even Solomon could not forget long, that burst of tenderness from his mother's heart,—“What, my son? and what, the son of my vows?” (Prov. xxxi. 2.) Even sailors have said to me, “I have fancied in a storm, that I heard mother's voice, during the pauses of the hurricane.” Thus it is not *talent* that speaks most powerfully to the heart, nor fine speeches that are best remembered. It is “the abundance” of the maternal heart, when baptized with the love of Christ, which utters “winged words” and touching appeals.

Neither talent nor taste, however, should be unemployed, nor left uncultivated. Hannah made a fine use of both in the Tabernacle, whilst her boy knelt at her side worshipping the Lord. His worship was, of course, very simple. Perhaps he could say no more as praise, than “Bless God for good parents;”

nor as prayer, than "Make me a good boy, and show mercy to the son of thine handmaid." Samuel noticed, however, and was evidently much struck too, with the sublime sentiments and language of his mother's worship, when she lifted up her voice in the Tabernacle, and sang, "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted over mine enemies, because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the Lord; for there is none beside thee, neither is there any rock like our God. The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed." This is lofty adoration, as well as lively gratitude; and yet her boy, if he did not fully understand it at the time, admired it, and remembered it. It came as fresh to his memory when he sat down to write his book of Scripture, in his old age, as if his mother had come from heaven to repeat it again to him.

But this is not all; her hymn of thanksgiving is full of great *general principles*; and Samuel remembered them too, notwithstanding his youth. The fact is, the *elevation* of her thoughts and language on this occasion was so much above her usual style, that it struck him. He had never heard her utter such a sublime hymn. And then it was evidently *made* for the occasion, and thus showed how much importance she attached to his consecration. And as she had prepared everything else with an express view to his benefit and comfort, it naturally occurred to him that she had taken *pains* with her anthem, in order both to gratify and impress him. This is a noble trait of her maternal character! It is as fraught with wisdom as it is fragrant with holy love and zeal. Hannah did not satisfy herself with saying merely to her boy, "God does not love the wicked:" she added to that

everyday maxim, the solemn words, "The wicked shall be silent in darkness. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces. Out of heaven shall He *thunder* upon them." She did more than say in his hearing, that God notices the poorest of his saints: she sang in his hearing, "He keepeth the feet of his saints, to make them inherit the throne of glory." And when she wished to impress him with the worth of good and upright men in this world, she called them the "pillars of the earth."

This is not tame nor commonplace talking. It is the language of a mother who thought for herself, and spoke as she felt. The whole hymn was evidently designed and adapted to lay hold of her son's imagination, heart, and conscience. And it did ! Samuel's whole life proves that his mother's views of the Divine character and government followed him as his

shadow, or rather as his guardian-angel, whether he ministered at the altar, or administered justice on the bench, or uttered prophecy in the gate. His mother, just as she stood at his side when she taught him great principles in sublime forms, whilst paying her own vows and homage to Jehovah, might have been "at his right hand," both when he obeyed and reprov'd Eli; both when he charged and denounced Saul; both when he anointed and counselled David; both when he led the army to victory at Bethcar, and the thousands of Israel to raise an Ebenezer at Mizpeh. The erection of that Ebenezer was quite in the spirit of his mother's grateful piety. She had set him, as *her* Ebenezer, in the sanctuary where she first obtained help of God: and he set up a monumental pillar upon the spot where the thunder of heaven discomfited the hosts

of Philistia, and rescued the ark of the covenant.

These, I am aware, are posts which our children are not likely to be called to fill, and duties unlikely to devolve upon them. This does not, however, alter the case much. Samuel's *principles* are necessary in all places, and under all circumstances, if we would have our children pass unspotted through the world, or maintain a conscience void of offence towards God and man. Less than a national victory deserves an Ebenezer of gratitude; and other, yea all offices, require clean hands and an honest heart. Your sons can only be honourable merchants, or upright tradesmen, by the same principles which made Samuel a pure judge and a faithful prophet. If, therefore, you would imitate Hannah, were your Samuel likely to minister at the throne, the bench, or the altar; and

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if you would not think it wise nor safe to trust his integrity to accident, nor to risk it upon tame maxims, apart from eternal motives, you ought to imitate her, whatever be your prospects or plans for your boy, by inculcating great principles as well as practical duties. You yourself, remember, require more than a knowledge of right and wrong, good and evil, in order to discharge your own duties. You cannot persevere in well doing, without drawing upon both the cross and the crown for motives. What would you be, if the love of Christ did not constrain you, and the grace of the Spirit help you, and the glories and solemnities of Eternity inspire you? Thus, if *you* cannot do without great principles, even in the domestic circle, how much less can your sons be kept from the evil of the world, by the mere knowledge of the distinctions between good and evil?

Look at this argument again. Had Samuel been told only, that he must not imitate Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, because they were a disgrace to the priesthood,—Eli's *winking* at their vileness, might have led him to think lightly of sin : but his mother had taught him, that “ the Lord is a God of knowledge, by whom actions are weighed ; and a God of holiness, by whom the wicked are broken in pieces ; ” and agreeably to these great principles he both avoided their company, and faithfully denounced their doom. In like manner, had he come into contact with the regal arrogance of Saul, without just views of the supremacy of the King of kings, he might have yielded to both the sacrilege and tyranny of Saul, upon reasons of expediency and gain : but his mother taught him to say of the proud and presuming, “ let not arrogance come out of your mouth . ” and he rebuked Saul

without ceremony or circumlocution, as well as refused to countenance him. In like manner, he continued to minister before the Lord at the altar, even when "men *abhorred* the offering of the Lord," because of the rapine and licentiousness of the senior priests, Hophni and Phinehas. Their vices had disgusted the public mind, and thus alienated the people from public worship. Virtuous women and upright men were ashamed to be seen at the house of God. Samuel's congregation were thus, a "congregation of evil doers," chiefly, for a time. But he did not quit the altar, nor minister at it less regularly or solemnly than he did at first. He felt that it was God's altar, and remembered how his parents loved and revered it. He knew that his mother would not "abhor the offering of the Lord," although no "mother in Israel" would loathe or despise the sons of Eli

more than she would. He felt that she would distinguish between the priests and the sacrifice: and accordingly he did so too, and continued to minister when the altar was unpopular.

CHAPTER IX.

MATERNAL INFLUENCE ON DAVID.

NEXT to the honour of being the mother of the Messiah, was the honour of being the mother of David, the regal ancestor and the chief type of the Saviour, "according to the flesh;" for, of all the prophets and kings of Judaism, David was the most illustrious. There are, indeed, some very dark spots upon the sun of his character. Be it remembered, however, that he could have concealed this humiliating and discreditable fact from us. He had influence enough in the later part of his reign, to have suppressed the chronicle of his crimes in the book of the kingdom: and he was under no necessity, but

a *moral* one, to publish or write his penitential confessions. He was, however, too humble and honest to pass himself off upon the church or the world for what he was not. It was, therefore, his own candour, that made us acquainted with his private history : and that history has saved millions from falling as David did. Yes, for one that has dared to shelter himself under the bad example of David, thousands have been warned and deterred by his bitter experience. He is, indeed, the grand *beacon* of the CHURCH. The world may not be much checked by the agonies of his spirit, nor by the calamities he entailed upon his person and family : but whilst hope or peace, light or joy, is valued or understood in the church of Christ, the anguish of David will be as the “drawn sword” of an angel upon the conscience of a Christian.

This is, however, but the least part of his

usefulness. His Psalms are a legacy next in value to the New Testament. As compositions, they are level to every capacity : and hence, both the child and the patriarch can make melody in their heart to the Lord, by singing, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." (Psalm xxiii.) Hence also the philosopher and the peasant can sing with the understanding, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handywork." (Psalm xix.)

But it is as EXPERIENCE, that the Psalms of David are most valuable. Well might HOOKER say, "Let there be any grief or disease incident to the soul of man ; any sickness or wound, named, for which there is not in this treasure-house a present comfortable remedy, at all times ready to be found." Well did BISHOP HORNE say, "Faith and repentance are *acted*" as well as "described," in the

Psalms. "The evil spirit is still dispossessed by the *harp* of the son of Jesse."

The mother of David had no doubtful nor slight influence in all this. We have not, indeed, an account of her character nor of her system, in relation to her family: but we have *one* fact and *two* references, in Scripture, concerning her, which prove that she was emphatically "a mother in Israel," at least to her own family. The fact I refer to is, that David's first solicitude, when the hatred of Saul to him became deadly, was to place his father and mother in safety, before he fled from the cave of Adullam to the forest of Hareth. (1 Sam. xxii. 3.) Thus, even in his own greatest straits and perils, he did not forget his parents. Nor did they forget him then: they had abandoned their home in Bethlehem Judah, to cheer him in the cave of Adullam: and, therefore, he would not

flee even from Saul, until he had placed them under the wing of the King of Moab.

Nor was he less attached to them when he became an enthroned king than while he was an anointed shepherd. We do not, indeed, know how high he raised them, nor where he fixed their abode; but we may safely conclude, that the son who had placed his parents under the special care of a king at Mizpeh, would not leave them in a cottage, when he himself dwelt in a palace. We do know, however, what he *felt* in the prospect of their death. That he reckoned would be such a loss to himself that, in anticipation of it, he said, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up!" (Psalm xxvii. 10.) This he said at a time when his chief enemies were subdued, and whilst he was surrounded by the old friends of his youth, and the new friends of his roy-

alty. Not amidst all these, although the circle contained sages and senators, heroes and priests, could his heart find one friend, who could be to him what his venerable father and mother had been : and yet not a few of that illustrious circle which graced his throne had jeopardized their lives for him. Yea, not even in his own large family, although then flourishing and united, could his heart find an *up-making* portion for the loss of his pious parents. God alone appeared to David to be a fit refuge, under that bereavement. He felt that it would lay him so *low* that God only could “ take him up.”

There is neither weakness nor sentimentality in all this, to a well-regulated mind. A sophisticated or artificial man of the world would have said to himself, on hearing a king speak thus, “ Why, David, neither your crown nor your sceptre, your wealth nor your fame,

will depart with the old people, die when they will." A heartless man would have said, "Here is much ado about nothing: the death of your father and mother can make no real difference to you. You do not inherit your title as a king; nor your mantle as a prophet; nor your laurels as a man of war, from them. Besides, what use could the old farmer of Bethlehem Judah, or his older-fashioned wife, be to you in affairs of state, or at court levees and drawing-rooms?"

Thus artificial and heartless men may have reasoned, when they heard David say, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up:" but an unsophisticated man, even if he has but little piety, would say of the king,—“All this is very natural, only natural. David had been more and longer happy under the parental roof than

he had ever been upon the throne. His father and mother had been the source and centre of his first enjoyments, and were now the only memorials of his boyish days, when he was a shepherd and a minstrel in the wilderness. He must miss them, even in his palace."

Every "honest heart" feels the truth of this interpretation, and responds to it instinctively. They do not know "what is in man," who are surprised to find a man, brought up amidst simple scenes and humble circumstances, cast down in spirit by the death of aged parents; whatever rank of mind or of place he may have acquired in the world. He cannot help it. He would not alter it if he could. The memory of early life is engraven on such a heart, as with the pen of a diamond. It cannot be obliterated. It becomes vivid when the hands which engraved it are cold in

death ; and the more vivid, in proportion to the *contrast* between the scenes of youth, and the scenes of manhood.

All this holds true in the case of every man who has not forgotten himself. It is not, however, half the truth, in the case of a man who "from a child," was trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ; and has found, all through life, the benefit of religious education and example. He too will remember the endearments of home, when a father's sanction and a mother's smile sweetened his boyish pleasures, and made his heart know that he was amusing himself properly. But he will remember more than this, when such parents die. Yes, however devotional he may be, their death will remind him of the first prayers he uttered, and the first hymn he sang, at their knee : however studious, it will remind him vividly of the first books he read at

his mother's side by candlelight, when he was allowed to sit up till supper-time, because he read well; and of the first questions he put to his father, when reading led to thinking, and thinking created difficulties. Yes, and however lofty or lovely may be his views of divine and eternal things, and however sound or strong his principles, he will feel that the foundations of both were laid by some timely hints which fell upon his young heart and conscience at home, or by some impression left on his mind by the example and spirit of his parents.

Something like this was evidently the secret of David's love to his father and mother, and of his deep sense of loss when they died. He was then a prophet, as well as a poet; a monarch, as well as a minstrel: but his mother had listened to his harp when its music was too wild for the court or the tabernacle;

when its only inspiration was from genius and nature ; when its themes were all as simple as the joys and sorrows of rural life. It was his mother's approbation of his first efforts to play well, that made him " skilful on the harp ;" and his father's approbation of his early piety, that made him " the sweet singer in Israel : " for inspiration sanctified and perfected, not created, the talents and taste which they watched over and encouraged. How much we owe, under God, to the good sense and piety of Jesse and his holy partner ? Had not David commended his harp and hymns to them, he would never have acquired confidence to devote either to the service of the temple or the tabernacle. God, indeed, could have qualified David for all his work, by a direct act of power, whatever his parents or his natural talents had been ; but it was more accordant with the Divine character and

government to bless parental duty, and honour personal effort. In general, He has done most *for* and *by* the men who improved most by what their parents did for them.

Nothing, however, strikes me more, in David's religious history, than the use he made of his mother's eminent piety. I do not hesitate to say *eminent*, although I am unable to show a single historical feature of her character or experience. Her son employed her *name* as a plea with God, when praying for salvation : " Save the son of thine handmaid." (Psalm lxxxvi. 16.) The very *singularity* of this plea, proves that she was a woman of no ordinary piety ; and, perhaps, implies that she was even more devotional than Jesse : for David does not plead by his father's name. In like manner, he mentions only his mother, when celebrating the signal deliverance of his soul from " the sorrows of death, and the

pains of hell!" "Truly I am the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds." All this proceeds upon the principle, and admits of no other explanation, than that David knew his mother to have, like the old patriarchs, "prevailing power with God" in prayer; or much influence, because much intercourse, at the throne of grace.

It was not, remember, *ordinary* names, that the saints of old employed, when they used any *human* plea for mercy or grace, upon emergencies. They singled out the person who was most distinguished for communion with God. "God of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac," said Jacob, when wrestling for mercy to himself. And David passed by in silence all the priests and prophets of his time, and by his father Jesse too, and prayed, "O turn unto me, and have mercy on me: save the son of thine handmaid." Thus he

turned in manhood to his mother's prayers for him, when he was brought "very low," just as he had turned in childhood to her bosom, when he was sick or sad.

This is a fine feature in his character ; but it implies a *finer* still in her character. Her devotional spirit and holy deportment must have eclipsed his own, and that of all his wide circle of friends. And then, David was a good judge of both the character and spirit of the prayers, which would have most weight with God. He knew well that God would not hear those who regarded iniquity in their heart : and as he threw himself upon his mother's prayers, he has thus told us, more plainly than words could have done, that he knew no one so "pure in heart" as his mother. He knew well that God beholdeth the proud afar off ; and he has told us, by appealing to her, that he knew no one so meek

or humble as his mother. He knew well that fervent prayer was the most effectual prayer; and by turning to her intercession, in preference to that of all his family and friends, he has told us that he knew no one so "mighty in prayer" as his mother.

This brings out, unexpectedly, much of his mother's character and spirit. And now mark—how much it reveals of his own! David must have been an attentive observer of his mother's devotional habits, whilst he was young. He must have noticed that, at a certain hour of the morning and evening, she left her work, and him too, and went alone to her chamber. He must have observed that, on these occasions, she always shut the door, and sometimes remained away longer than usual. He must have set himself to find out, by listening or inquiry, what she was doing at these times. When he understood that she

was alone with God in prayer, he must have marked her looks, as she came down from her closet, sometimes beaming with hope, and at other times saddened by fears. He must have been struck with the fact, that his mother was not always equally happy after prayer : but that, whether sad or cheerful, she always did retire to pray ; and was often longest alone, when she was the very picture of happiness all day. He must also have noticed that, when there was sickness in the house, or when any of his brothers were from home, she *slipt* away to her closet, at other times than the hour of the morning and evening sacrifice. Thus, he must have studied his mother with a watchful eye, from day to day

I know that David has not said all this, nor any of it, in words ; but I maintain that he has revealed it all, and more, by the *stress*

he laid on his mother's prayers. "Save the son of thine handmaid," is a plea which he never would have pressed upon God, had she not been openly and emphatically a *handmaid*, who waited regularly upon God, and for God. A mother who had prayed only by fits and starts, or who breathed no devotional spirit but on the Sabbath, would not have gained any such ascendancy over the heart or hopes of a son, who prayed much and fervently for himself.

I have been minute, almost to tediousness, in tracing out the *hidden veins* of this maternal character, because it has never been sufficiently unveiled—so far as my own reading enables me to judge; and chiefly, because there is nothing makes such an impression on the mind of children, as the devotional habits and spirit of their mothers. A mother who is hardly ever seen with her Bible in her hand,

reading for her own improvement and comfort, will not, like Eunice, win her Timothy, "from a child," to know or love the Holy Scriptures. A mother, who is not known to retire for secret prayer, as well as to take care that family prayer is decorously attended, will not teach prayer with much success, nor endear it at all, to her children. She must be a prayerful mother, and *known* in her family to be so, who would have her children feel, like David, that their own prayers for mercy and grace are strengthened by her faith and holiness. They must know well, in some way, that they are "the children of many prayers," if she would ever have them trace, or be able herself to trace, any of their temporal or spiritual deliverances, to the petitions she has *filed* at the throne of grace, on their behalf.

But, how easily all this may be secured by

a mother! Nothing is so easily turned into fervent and believing prayer, as the *gushing* solicitude of a mother's heart, for the welfare of her children: and nothing touches the heart of a child so readily or deeply, as the knowledge of the fact, that mamma often prays for him after he is asleep, and before he awakes, and even whilst he is at school or at play. Many a hardy and hardened sailor, has said to me, after an escape from shipwreck, "It was my old mother's prayers for me, sir, that the Almighty remembered, when he preserved me." Yes; all a mother's heart is seen and felt, and that in its *sweetest* form, in her fond prayers for her boy. He will not forget, when he becomes a man, her kiss, nor her smile, nor her tenderness, nor her forbearance, nor her little presents however small: but he will remember most, what she depended most upon, and what she threw all her soul

into,—her prayers for his welfare and salvation !

O, why do not mothers attach more importance to frequent and fervent prayer for their children, and indulge more hope of its success? You were intended to be intercessors for them. As Sheshbazzar would have said, “Much as I admire the breastplate of the high-priest, so firmly hung from his neck, and so closely bound to his heart; so rich and radiant with gems, equally deep set and encased in pure gold, and equally engraved with the pen of a diamond, and equally open to the mild and mystic light of the glory between the cherubim; I admire still more, the heart of a holy mother.* Its maternal sympathies exceed the lustre of gems: its love is purer than fine gold: the names of her children are more deeply engraved upon it, than the names of the tribes upon the precious stones

of the breastplate ; and each name is equally dear to her, even when, like Abraham, she cries, ' Let Ishmael live before God.' And then her intercessory breastplate is never put off, until her heart become a clod of the valley."

Mothers ! you can get no such powerful or permanent hold upon the heart of your children, as by making your own " heart a house of prayer" for them. You can get no hold upon the heart of God *for* them—until their eternal welfare lay hold upon your heart. Whilst the mother of Zebedee's children prayed only for temporal blessing for her sons, the Saviour rebuked her and her sons too : but when the Syrophenician mother prayed for her daughter's deliverance from the power of Satan, Jesus had mercy on mother and daughter at the same time. Let these facts teach you wisdom.

Your children can only "prosper and be in health," in the *best* sense, "according as their souls prosper." Your solicitude and prayers should therefore run more upon their spiritual than on their temporal prosperity. In a word, let your chief prayers for them now be such, and for such things, that when your spirit exchanges worlds, and judges of lots and callings in the light of eternity, you may have no reason to blush before the throne of Heaven, nor to wish yourself back again to the earth for their sake, nor to ask like Dives of Abraham, that some one should be sent direct from the invisible world to your mistaken "house," to tell them of your regrets and their own danger.

Your own heart has suggested many things, which I have not even hinted at, whilst you have been reading these pages. I have pur-

posely abstained from saying all I thought, or showing all I see, in this subject, just that you might say to yourself, "These hints have set my maternal duties and interests in new lights before me: and that not so much by what the author has said, as by what my own heart and conscience have suggested. From whence came the vivid views I now have of the necessity and value of prayer for my children? What influence has fallen on my spirit, that I feel bound to bear my children upon my heart at the mercy-seat, more than ever I have done? This impression cannot be accidental, for the subject of the essay is not new to me, nor is there anything very powerful or pathetic in the mode of treating it. It is very evident, that the writer loved his mother, and had watched her with an observant and fond eye, as she blended daily prayer with her daily duties, and extraordinary prayer

with all times of trial: but this will not account for the strong lights I see upon the path of my own maternal duty. Surely God has been in this place;—and I knew it not!”

CHAPTER X.

MATERNAL INFLUENCE ON SOLOMON.

No life presents such a lesson as Solomon's, upon the subject of human instability. It is the very climax of weakness and strength, wisdom and folly, vice and virtue. It was, therefore, worthy of God to give the picture of Solomon at full length to the world and the church, in the Scriptures ; for both need the lessons it teaches. The world still thinks that wealth, luxury, and amusement may be pursued with safety, and yield happiness to their votaries ; and the church is not so much afraid of them, nor so jealous of herself, as her Saviour and Sovereign commands her to be. She fears no evil, indeed, so little as " the evil

of the world," although that be the only evil, of all she is exposed to, which Christ, in his last intercessory prayer, pleaded that she might be "kept from." (John, vii. 15.) "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." Not a word, you see, about the danger which arises from satanic temptation, or from state persecution, or from public reproach, although, on all other occasions except in his parting prayer, the Saviour warned his disciples against everything evil, which was likely to ensnare or seduce them. This is a remarkable fact, especially in reference to the apostles. They were, of all men, the least connected with the business, bustle, gains, or gaieties of the world; and then they were just about to be inspired, and thus to have miraculous gifts blended with all their grace: and yet, Christ

did not think them safe from the evil of the world ; but in so much danger from worldly influence, that all their other dangers were passed over by him in silence, in his last prayer. The Saviour showed by this that “ He knew what is *in* man ;” and thus prayed most against what we dread least.

Experience, in all ages, has verified the profound wisdom and prudence of this prayer. The love of the world drowns far more in destruction and perdition, and draws more into lukewarmness and backsliding, than all the fiery darts of Satan, or the swords and sneers of persecution. This is a solemn fact ! And not less so is the fact, that *good* principles, however gracious and holy, are not a safeguard against “ the evil of the world,” any further or longer than they are upheld by prayerfulness on our own part, and by the intercession of Christ for us. If ever good men were safe

to trust their stedfastness to the *innate vitality* of good principles, or to the *native tendencies* of true grace ; or could have passed unspotted and undeadened through the world, without putting many prayers into the golden censer of the great Intercessor before the throne, the Apostles would have been the safest ; for they were inspired as well as pious, and, with the exception of Paul and Matthew, perhaps all their habits from youth to manhood, although industrious, were simple and unworldly. They had ambition, indeed ; but it was rather spiritual or ecclesiastical than secular or temporal. Besides, their ambition, whatever it was, was all burnt up by the holy fire of Pentecost, or purified into the fine gold of zeal for the spiritual and eternal welfare of mankind, and the glory of the Lamb slain. And yet, their Master, who knew them and the world too thoroughly, did not

think them a *match* for it in all its ensnaring and carnalizing forms, although the inspiration of each Apostle eclipsed that of all the Prophets in fulness and clearness, and the piety of each surpassed that of the holiest saints of old. He taught them to pray much, and bound them to *watch* unto prayer, and made them feel that they needed His own prayers on earth and in heaven, in order to their being kept from the evil of the world.

All this made a powerful impression upon them, whatever we may think of it. It not only led Paul to bring his body under, and keep it in subjection, lest he should be a cast-away; but also to study the cross of Christ as intended to deliver Christians equally from "the present evil world," from the wrath to come, from the curse of the law, and from the fear of death. John also evinces for himself and others, more habitual and holy dread of worldly

influences than of Satanic snares and wiles. Peter almost seems to fall upon his knees, with streaming eyes, when "beseeching" Christians to pass through the world as pilgrims and strangers, and to keep themselves from its sensual and selfish lusts. Thus deeply did the Apostles drink into the spirit of Christ on this subject. His long life in Nazareth, so self-denied, so devotional, so simple, so heavenly, which most of them had witnessed for many years—seems to have haunted them like a vision, or followed them like their shadow, wherever they went. Their own life, after they went into the world as the Apostles of the Lamb, was one continued effort to verify the commendation he gave them before he left the world, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (John, xvii. 16.) Hence Paul could say on his way to martyrdom, "I have coveted no man's gold, or silver,

or apparel." (Acts, xx. 33.) Hence John could say of himself and his churches, "As Christ was, in the world, so are we." (1 John, ii. 2.) I thus bring out the Saviour's opinion of both the world and the Apostles, that we may see clearly the *rock* on which Solomon split so fearfully, and from which the wrecks of his early character were brought off with so much difficulty. He was not *afraid* of the world, nor of his own heart, *after* the completion of the temple and the establishment of his throne. He almost ceased to be a *praying* man, when he had finished the great work which his father devolved upon him. We hear nothing of his prayers for wisdom or strength, and see nothing of his watchfulness or humility, after the dedication of the temple, until we find him in his old age completing his Proverbs, and compiling his Ecclesiastes.

This is the real *secret* of all Solomon's intermediate voluptuousness and idolatry, and the true key to the dark side of his character and history. He was not, perhaps, a very *devotional* man from the first, except just while the responsibilities of a crown were new to him, and whilst he had to consult God from day to day, as the building the temple went on. Then, however, he prayed even in his sleep, (1 Kings, iii. 5,) and his Dedicatory Prayer is full of evidence that he had been in deep communion with God in the closet, before coming to the consecration. Thus, there was not a little of his father's devotional spirit about him, whilst his hands were full of public work for the glory of God and the good of Jerusalem. Never afterwards, however, is *this* spirit to be traced in anything Solomon did or said. The ardour of his piety evaporated when his "SONG OF SONGS" was finished.

Accordingly, in all his other writings, there is hardly a *burst* of love, gratitude, or adoration to be found. Even when he is wisest, he is not warm. Head, not *heart*, characterizes all his Proverbs and reasonings, except when he speaks as a parent and a magistrate. Then he pleads and appeals with feeling, and sometimes with *unction* even ; but in general, he is as cold as he is acute, and far more a philosopher than a saint. I mean, Solomon never kindles like Isaiah, nor melts like Jeremiah, nor pours out his soul like David, nor checks himself like Asaph, nor humbles himself like Job. Job and Asaph return from their wildest complaints and rashest speculations to their *knees* again, and *weep* even whilst they are wayward ; but Solomon is almost a stoic, except when glimpses of the judgment-seat flash upon his spirit. (Eccl. xi. 9.) So true it is that “ the spirit of the prophets was

subject to the prophets !” It constrained them to write all the truth, but left them at perfect liberty to express their own feelings of joy or grief, love or admiration. Solomon, however, made but little use of this holy liberty ; and, evidently, because he was not a devotional man. And yet, how he could be so unlike his father is not very easily explained ; for of nothing good, had he such an example before him. David was emphatically a man of prayer, and fonder of kneeling at the throne of God, than of sitting upon his own throne ; for whatever were his faults or defects, an undevo-^{tional} spirit was not one of them. In regard to devotion, he combined the wrestlings of a saint with the raptures of a seraph. Now, Solomon knew this fact well. He could not be ignorant of it. He must often have known his father to be up early and late in his closet, and heard him singing at midnight. And yet

he did "not take after him" long or much in this respect.

Let us now examine whether the spirit of his mother throws any light upon this grand defect in his character. He was her favourite son. Hence he says, "I was tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother." (Prov. iv. 3.) Her care and affection deserved this acknowledgment; and it is most likely that what he calls "the prophecy which Lemuel's mother taught him," is only a fair specimen of Bathsheba's maternal counsels. (Prov. xxxi.) Still, Bathsheba, although a tender and watchful mother, was not a woman of fine feelings, nor of a devotional spirit. Her request to Solomon for permission to Adonijah, to marry his father's wife, Abishag, the Shunamite, shows only too plainly that Bathsheba had not a very high or delicate tone of mind. She ought, perhaps, to be rather pitied than blamed;

and it would be unfair to try her by our standards of female virtue; but still, not all the deadening influence of polygamy and concubinage can be admitted as an apology for proposing an unnatural match, and calling it "a *small* petition." (1 Kings, ii. 20.) It deserves special notice also, that her best counsels to Solomon, although full of practical wisdom, breathe no spirituality. Even her fine picture of a good wife and a well-ordered house, whilst it makes "the fear of the Lord" the foundation of domestic happiness, makes industry, economy, and prudence the chief virtues, and names neither prayer nor meditation, the closet or the sanctuary. (Prov. xxxi. 1.)

There is another fact in regard to Bathsheba, which throws still more light upon her religious character. David, although dotingly fond of her, never once mentions her in any

of his Psalms. Again and again he refers to his mother, but never to his wife. This tells a tale, although tacitly ; for she had witnessed his chief joys and sorrows as a penitent, as well as his vicissitudes as a king. She had heard him "cry, yea roar," under a sense of guilt and shame, and seen his tears by day and night whilst the hand of God was heavy upon him ; but even in the 51st Psalm there is no reference to her as sharing at all in either his confessions or supplications. Now David was not the man to remain silent in her case, had she taken a part or an interest in his devotional habits. He "comforted" her, when her first child died, although his own heart was well nigh broken with that loss ; and on the birth of Solomon, pledged himself to her to set him upon the throne ; and all this she duly appreciated ; but we never hear of her returning any of his kindness, by taking

a lively interest in the Psalms he wrote for the good of the church, or in the preparations he made for the building of the temple. Now, remember, that she was not a weak nor an ordinary woman. Bathsheba had as great talents as beauty. Her mind, although not delicate, was strong and resolute. Her tastes also were simple and domestic. She was not, therefore, incapable of appreciating the genius and piety of David. She might have been "a help meet for him," had she taken as much interest in her Bible and closet as she did in her house-keeping and dress. But although she could rise "whilst it was yet night," and keep her candle burning late, this "redeeming of time" seems to have had little or no connexion with secret or family devotion. (Prov. xxxi. 15.)

Such was the general character of Solomon's mother ; not low, nor unlovely, nor illiterate, nor unprincipled ; but still, not spiritual or

devotional. And now you begin to see how Solomon resembled her rather than his father. He too saw David's religious joys and sorrows, and must have seen that his mother did not sympathize much with either ; and thus the cool and easy manner in which she could take both the penitential and seraphic Psalms of "the sweet singer in Israel," counteracted the holy influence of the harp of Judah upon the young heart of her clever son. Accordingly, in all his grand efforts and experiments to acquire either wisdom or happiness, he never once tried to find them in communion with God by prayer, nor in devotional poetry, nor in consulting the oracle by Urim and Thummim, as his father had done ; but began, when he had finished the temple, to inquire anywhere but in the temple, for them. At first, indeed, he confined his experiments to nature, and investigated both vegetable and animal life,

until he could speak of trees "from the cedar-tree that is in Lebanon, to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall. He spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things and fishes." (1 Kings, iv. 33.) Many learned Jews maintain that Aristotle's Natural History was stolen from Solomon's books on this subject. But, however this may be, it is certain that neither naturalist rose very near "to Nature's God." The most melancholy proof of how little Solomon did so, whilst studying nature amongst the everlasting hills and the rich valleys of Palestine, is, that of all the "thousand and five songs" he wrote, whilst a student, only one of them was deemed worthy of preservation in the Scriptures. This is the real reason why it is called "The Song of Songs." Almost all his father's songs obtained a place in the Book of Psalms, but his own have been lost even to the literature

of his country and the world. (1 Kings, iv. 32.) A more striking proof of his undevotional spirit could hardly be given than the fact, that a thousand and four of his poems were deemed utterly unworthy of either the seal of God or the wing of time to preserve them, although almost all his Proverbs obtained both. In the same spirit also, Solomon planted gardens and vineyards, and built palaces, towers, and a navy ; filling the land with monuments of his taste and skill, from Eziongeber on the coast, to Tadmor in the wilderness ; and making "silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars to be as the sycamores of the vale for abundance." (1 Kings, x. 27.) Never was king more patriotic or enterprising, in these times. He enjoyed himself, indeed, but he lived for his people in all things, save the "one thing needful." He just countenanced public worship by his

presence and offerings and proverbs, whilst all this was going on ; but he never composed a Psalm for the temple, nor held much fellowship with pious men, nor made his character felt for anything great but worldly wisdom and patriotism.

This is bad enough, but the worst remains to be told. He became both a voluptuary and an idolater, or at least the abettor and patron of idolatry. "Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites, and built the high places of Chemosh and Molech." (1 Kings, xi. 5.) The man who built the temple of JEHOVAH did this ! "Lord, what is man !"

The explanation of all this, when it took place, is satisfactory, although melancholy :—"Solomon's wives turned away his heart, for he clave unto these in love." It is not, how-

ever, very easy to explain how such a man could become so infatuated by any bad influence, human or infernal. True; this occurred in his "old age;" but he was not too old to be accountable, nor to be reproved, nor to be punished. He wrote his Ecclesiastes after these shameful compromises and compliances. Besides, no such apostacy from truth or duty could have taken place at once. Solomon must have been backsliding long before he fell thus shamefully; and must have all along been duping himself with some plausible and subtle sophistry, of his own invention. I say, of his *own* invention, because whatever atheistical or metaphysical philosophy he drank in, whilst indulging in the wild speculations of the Arabian scholars of Dedan and Deman, needs as much to be accounted for as the vile idolatries which followed his reckless theorizing. He shows in his Ecclesiastes that he

had been all but an atheist, before he became an idolater. Now we have seen that he was anything but a devotional man, after the completion of the temple. This proves a great deal against him. It proves that he was not only ignorant of his own weakness, and of the power of temptation, but also that he had a high opinion of his own strength, and a proud confidence in his self-control. No man who knows himself and the world too, by the word of God, will venture to be undevotional. No man will neglect or restrain prayer, who thoroughly believes that good principles must be upheld by the grace which implanted them. It is, therefore, self-evident that Solomon began his career of speculation, experiment, and indulgence, under an idea that he could go *lengths* with safety, which ordinary men, or any other man, could not venture upon without certain ruin. There can be no doubt, judging

from his Proverbs, that he would have deemed any of his own wild or ambitious experiments, the high road to final apostacy, in the case of even his cleverest friends and companions. Had he seen any prince or sage of Jerusalem trying how much wine he could drink, or how much speculation he could indulge, or how many heathen alliances he could form, or even how much he could plant and build for gain or luxury, he would have told him without ceremony, that he was tempting God to abandon him to a seared conscience and a reprobate mind. Yea, had any man, however sober in his habits, or moderate in his pursuit of the world, asked him whether it would be *safe* to make devotion the least and last thing in piety, he would have told him that God would not bear the insult, nor wink at the neglect. And had the *young* men of his court or kingdom inquired, whether it was *safe*

for them to read the sceptical and atheistical books he studied, or to dispute with the Arabian metaphysicians he consulted, or to plunge as he was doing into all the dark and daring questions which human curiosity or infernal ingenuity had started, he would have warned them against such speculations, as being equally impious, and perilous, and fruitless ; and said to each, "Know thou, O young man, that God will bring thee into judgment !"

Solomon thought, however, that *he* could indulge both the lusts of the flesh and the mind, to a degree, which no other man could safely venture upon. This is no conjecture. "I turned myself," he says, "to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly. Whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them. I withheld not my heart from any joy ; yet acquainting my heart with wisdom !" (Eccl. ii.) There

it is! He proudly presumed that he could stop or retreat, at any point of his career, and come unhurt out of any experiment he ventured upon. He was confident that nothing could enslave or trammel him, a moment longer than he chose. He reckoned that he saw so thoroughly through all business, pleasure, and speculation, and had such self-control, that he could *play* with anything, human or divine, without committing himself too far, or cutting off his retreat when he found the game too hazardous. O how unlike the man he was, when he humbly prayed, "Now, O Lord God, give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before thy people that is so great." (2 Chron. i. 10.) "Thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child, I know not how to go out or come in. Give thy servant an understanding heart, that I may discern between

good and bad." (1 Kings, iii. 7.) The sacred historian says, "The speech *pleased* the Lord, that Solomon asked this thing." Accordingly, whilst Solomon sought wisdom in this way, he never had to exclaim, "vanity of vanities," nor to complain of "vexation of spirit." But when he began to read, study, or speculate, without prayerfulness; and to vie with heathen kings in luxury, and with heathen philosophers in wit, taste, science, and sophistry, his mind soon ceased to revolve upon the poles of revelation; and thus all truth, human and divine, acquired in his devotionless spirit an equal aspect of uncertainty and mystery; and then, it was only natural, even for him, to humour the idolatrous taste of his queens, as mere follies. Truth and duty had become to himself "doubtful disputations;" and thus idolatry seemed to him merely a harmless *whim*, not worth

opposing, so long as it was kept out of the temple.

Now there is nothing in all this, as to the spirit and result of it, but just what happens still, although upon a smaller scale, whenever the young, old, or middle-aged give way to an overweening confidence in their own power of self-control, or their own ability of meddling with all knowledge. Many a young man thus reads and reasons himself *out* of the first principles of the oracles of God, and *into* the last problems of the ungodly; and many a clever man thus takes liberties with law and gospel, which, although they stop short of turning the grace of God into licentiousness, yet strain the conscience so, and blunt the feelings so, that what is good about him does no good to others, and yields no comfort to himself. In a word, a stranger to prayer, may be estranged, in the long run, even

from the *form* as well as from the power of godliness.

Having gone thus far and minutely into the character of Solomon, I can hardly avoid the question,—did he repent, and thus recover himself from his fearful apostacy? Now we are not told in so many words, or expressly, that he did. It does not, however, seem doubtful at all. His Ecclesiastes were evidently written after his apostacy; for they narrate things he had done, and experiments he had tried, and both of a kind which could only have been attempted with success in the prime of life. And as he was *old* before he tampered with idolatry, he was of course *older* when he confessed and denounced the wild pursuits which led him into it.

CHAPTER XI.

MATERNAL INFLUENCE ON JOHN THE BAPTIST.

“It is the glory of God to *conceal* a thing,” said Solomon. This inspired proverb, with nearly a hundred and fifty more, seems to have been overlooked or mislaid by “the Scribe” of Solomon, who published the first edition of the Book of Proverbs. The original manuscripts of the king were found again, however, in the days of his successor Hezekiah, who caused those proverbs to be “copied out” which the first editor had overlooked. (Prov. xxv. 1.) Eliakim, Shebna, and Joash were perhaps the scribes of Hezekiah on this occasion. But whoever they were, they showed much good sense in

placing at the head of the new Proverbs the profound maxim, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing." The world as well as the church pays homage to the truth of this maxim, whenever it is said,— "It is a mercy, we knew not, when we began life, what was before us ; for could we have foreseen all that has befallen us and ours, we should have sunk under the prospect." Parents especially have reason to be thankful that they knew not "the end from the beginning." God alone, perhaps, can bear such knowledge of the future. Man certainly could not bear it, even if the future were to be a scene of unbroken prosperity. The foresight of that, would as surely intoxicate, as the foresight of unbroken calamity would overwhelm. Indeed, it is not at all likely that even Angels, who "excel in strength," and who have nothing to fear but everything to hope, from the future events of

both time and eternity, could bear to have the veil lifted up at once, or even gradually, from all that is before them, either of service or enjoyment, in heaven. All that will occur in eternity, is a sight which would dazzle, if not blind any eye but that of Omniscience. In heaven, therefore, as well as on earth, it is the glory of God to conceal some things. Accordingly, the Saviour said concerning some of the events of time, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven." (Mark xiii. 32.) If this refer to the day of judgment, as well as to the destruction of Jerusalem, it is the glory of God, and that glory is all *goodness* to angels, to conceal the precise time of the second advent from them : for when the end cometh, they have not only to "gather the elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other," but also to gather out of His kingdom

all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and to cast them into a furnace of fire." (Matt. xiii. 41.) Now this work will be trying enough when it comes to be done, without the trial of having to count the hours, the days, or the years, until its coming. Thus Angels, although they have nothing to suffer or fear from the future, have yet much to do, and must just live by faith as well as ourselves, so far as "the times and seasons appointed by the Father" may call them to new duties, or place them in peculiar circumstances; for the office of an Angel is no *sine-cure*, nor is his knowledge prophetic.

Now if the glory of heavenly concealments be goodness even to heavenly beings, how wise and kind it is in God to conceal the future from us, by an impenetrable and immoveable veil! We feel, I am aware, an instinctive curiosity to know something of what shall

happen to us, and ours. We would, I fear, lift the veil a little, if we could. Parents, especially, like the friends of Zacharias and Elizabeth, would somewhat like to have some answer to the question, "What manner of child shall this be? But if John's parents felt thus, they said nothing. This is the more remarkable and praiseworthy, because so much had been told them by the Angel, concerning both the rank and office of their first-born and only son, that it would not have been very unnatural or wonderful, if they had wished to know also how his illustrious life would close. His melancholy end, however, was wisely concealed from them; and as the Angel said nothing about "what death" John should die, they wisely asked no questions, but contented themselves with the joy of knowing that their son's life would be holy and useful. It is also highly probable

that Gabriel himself was as ignorant of the fact, that John would be beheaded in prison, as Zacharias or Elizabeth. Or if Gabriel did know that martyrdom awaited the forerunner of Christ, he said nothing about it. The manner in which he spoke, however, indicates no such knowledge, and breathes no suspicion. Besides, the knowledge could have done Gabriel no good. I mean, it would have been no help to him, either in bearing or delivering his message; but rather been embarrassing to him.

Any Angel no doubt, and especially Gabriel, could think of martyrdom much more calmly than we can: but still, if Angels have strong minds, they have also tender hearts. It would, therefore, have been not a little trying even to the Archangel, had he known all, to have had to say to himself, after delivering his message to the venerable

priest, " Ah, if Zacharias knew all that I do, how the foresight of ' John's head in a charger ' would damp the old man's joy, and cloud his bright prospects ! And as to Elizabeth, if she knew what Herodias would plot, and Herod perpetrate, against her only son, it would almost tempt her to prefer to remain childless ; or if it had not that effect, it might unfit her for maternal duty. At least, it could be no easy task to be knowingly the mother of a martyr !" It would not be unworthy of an angel, even of Gabriel, to feel thus. You feel that it would have been *unkind* to tell the melancholy fact to either parent, especially as it was no part of his message, whatever it might be of his knowledge or foresight.

I make thus free with Gabriel, just that you may judge from the supposed effect on him, what must have been the real effect on

both Zacharias and Elizabeth, had they known from the first that their only son was to be beheaded in a dungeon, as the victim of such wretches as Herod and Herodias. For even if both parents could have meekly said the Gethsemane grace, " Father, thy will be done," over such a bitter cup, and have managed to keep their boy ignorant of his fate, and had never betrayed by word or look to him the sad secret of their own hearts, still, the very effort to be thus calm, and thus guarded, must have wasted both their health and spirits, like fire in their bones, at their advanced time of life. Mere nature could not have borne up long enough to nurse the boy, nor without a miracle could Elizabeth have been a healthy nurse for even one month. Thus it seems as necessary for the child as for the mother, that the veil of futurity should not be lifted up from the closing scenes of

John's life. Truly, it is the glory of God to conceal a thing !

Much however was revealed by Gabriel to Zacharias and Elizabeth, and well did they remember it all. The venerable priest became a *prophet*, the moment his tongue was able to repeat to his friends the words of the Angel. And what he said to his friends in Hebron, we can well believe was sung over the boy's cradle by both parents, "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest ; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his way ; to give the knowledge of salvation to His people, by the remission of their sins." (Luke, i. 76.) This is Zacharias' version of Gabriel's message. The Angel said of John, " Many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before HIM, in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers unto the children ; and the disobe-

dient, to the wisdom of the just ; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (Luke, xvi. 17.) On comparing these two predictions of John's greatness and success as the forerunner of the Saviour, it is difficult to say whether the aged priest or the archangel was the more eloquent prophet. I admire, however, Elizabeth, as much as either of them, so far as *principle* is concerned. She had not heard Gabriel's message, and her husband was dumb when he came home ; and thus she knew less than Zacharias of the bright destiny of her unborn son ; but neither what she knew, nor what she wished, prevented her from rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory, when her "cousin Mary" came to Hebron. Gabriel himself did not "hail Mary," as the virgin mother, with more delicacy or delight than Elizabeth welcomed and congratulated her. Elizabeth did not, in-

deed, forget that she herself was about to be the joyful mother of a man child, as interesting as the Isaac of Abraham and Sarah, because equally unexpected ; but she took a still deeper interest in the birth of the Saviour. Hence her fine exclamation when Mary saluted her, “ And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me ? ” Thus her LORD was dearer to her than even the son of her old age, although an only son.

This was just the woman to be the mother of John the Baptist. And how *like* his mother John became in this respect ! She wondered when she saw Mary come to her in “ the hill country,” after the miraculous conception ; and when Jesus came to John to be baptized, John exclaimed, “ Comest thou to me ? I have need to be baptized of Thee.” And this is not the only instance in which he breathed his mother’s spirit, when speaking of Christ.

"His shoe's latchet," he said, "I am not worthy to unloose;"—"That he should be manifest to Israel, I come baptizing with water, but he shall baptize with the holy Ghost;"—"He must increase, but I must decrease;"—"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord;"—"The next day John seeth Jesus walking, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." What is all this but the reverberated echoes of his mother's piety, when she exclaimed, "Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" I fearlessly set this fine parallel between the mother and son, against all the *traditional* reports of Elizabeth's early death, and John's angelic nursing and education. I do not indeed think that his mother lived to hear him preach, nor that she was his companion when he left

Hebron to dwell in the deserts ; but I do think, judging from the internal evidence furnished by himself, that she was long enough spared to him, to fit him for the solitude of the wilderness, and imbue him with the elements of that knowledge and moral sublimity which tradition has fondly, but foolishly, ascribed to the guardian angel who watched over his prototype Elijah.

This argument is more solid than it seems at first sight ; for nothing in John's sayings, nor in the Jews' opinions, indicates the slightest idea that there was anything miraculous or angelic in his training whilst a youth. " All the people thought John a *great* prophet ;" but none of them treated him as a *prodigy*, except in reference to his complete inspiration and commanding character. In like manner he himself rested all his claims to public attention and confidence upon the fact that he

had been predicted by Isaiah, and sent by God to baptize. In like manner, none of the Saviour's high eulogiums on John, and they are many as well as great, imply anything miraculous in his training. He calls him "a burning and a shining light; a prophet and more than a prophet;" and declares, that there had not arisen "amongst them that are born of women, one greater than John the Baptist;" but he connects his greatness only with the woman who bore him, and with the inspiration of God. We are thus left at full liberty, if not also bound, by all authentic history, to regard John as a fine specimen of maternal influence. No other view of the case accords with scriptural facts, or accounts for the striking resemblance between the mother and the son. Her chief joy was, the prospect of seeing Jesus; and her son said, "This my joy is fulfilled," when he saw and

heard Jesus. Who does not feel now, that this "burning and shining light" was kindled under the maternal wing at Hebron, as well as fanned into brilliancy by the wings of inspiration in the wilderness, that it might be the herald-star of the Sun of righteousness. John was, indeed, "filled with the holy ghost," from his birth, if not even before he was born, as was Jeremiah also. But as Jeremiah, although thus sanctified and ordained to be a prophet, did not himself know the fact until God told him; and as he pleaded his youth as an excuse for not venturing to speak, until God touched his lips, and put words in his mouth as well as grace in his heart, it is evident that this *infantine* inspiration was but incipient, or did not exclude either the ordinary discipline of home, or the extraordinary communications of the spirit. Jeremiah's youthful modesty, when the Lord

first spoke to him, proved, like that of Samuel, that he had been well brought up in his father's house at Anathoth. "Samuel feared to tell Eli the vision;" and Jeremiah said, "Ah, Lord God, I cannot speak; for I am a child." (1 Sam. iii. 15. Jer. i. 6.) John's case is evidently a parallel one; or no more precluded home-instruction at Hebron, than Samuel's did at Ramah, or Jeremiah's at Anathoth. Indeed, the very fact that John was baptized with the Holy Ghost from his birth, would naturally render his pious parents only the more careful to train him up in the ways of God.

And now, it is easy to conceive, even to realize vividly, how Zacharias and Elizabeth would watch and pray over this inspired child of their old age; and the more so, because, not only all their immediate neighbours in the sacerdotal town of Hebron, but also "all the

hill country (folks) of Judea," had laid up in their hearts the sayings of his father, and were wondering "what manner of child" John would turn out. But I will not try to depict the scenes of his nursery, nor the sensations of his parents, nor the development of his own mind. I forbear this, not only because it would be conjectural, but also because you could not look at this domestic scene without seeing the prison of John, and the sword of Herod, and the bodkin of Herodias. You could not help thinking of John's martyrdom, even if I could describe the very process of his education, and tell the events of his boyhood. You would be forever saying to yourself, as every new scene of duty and endearment arose,—Ah, venerable parents, if you had foreseen what awaited that fine youth, you could not have watched over him as you did: his very excellencies, as well as

his loveliness, would have aggravated your grief for his sad destiny.

I feel all this, in common with you. I am not, however, prepared to say that John's parents *could* not have educated him aright, if they had foreseen all that we know ; much less do I think that they *would* not have done their duty to the martyr elect. I readily grant that it would have been very trying to both faith and patience, as well as to flesh and blood ; and confess that I do not see how Elizabeth could have been a healthy nursing mother, had she either known or suspected the fatal issue of all her pains and prayers for her boy : but I do not think it impossible for godly parents—even not for a mother—to train a *martyr*, without either sinking or shrinking. The mother of Jesus had this to do ; and she did it well, although she knew, (for old Simcon told her) that “ a sword should

pierce through her own soul," when Jesus was "set for a sign spoken against in Israel." Mary "pondered in her heart" all the sayings of both Simeon and the Angels concerning the Saviour; but whatever she felt, she never shrunk from her maternal duties at either his cradle or his cross. As, therefore, her cousin Elizabeth was evidently a kindred spirit, it is not improbable that she would have equalled Mary, had she been equally put to the test.

Now I come to the grand point I have in view in this chapter. A martyrdom has just occurred at ERROMANGA, so shocking, unprovoked, and treacherous, that many a mother, who like Hannah had not only consecrated a child unto the Lord, but also, like the mothers of some of our best missionaries, to the service of the Lord amongst the heathen, is now staggered, and almost ready to retract her vow,

and to induce her son to retrace his steps from a field of labour so perilous. I do not think that the new martyr-blood of John Williams will be less fruitful than the old blood of martyrdom, so far as a sufficiency of missionaries for the islands of the sea is concerned. More, indeed, will come forward to be "baptized for the dead," than did to imitate the living, Williams. Martyrdom never unmanned the young men nor the maidens of the church of Christ yet. For although there have always been some who loved father or mother, or life, more than Christ, there have been always, and will be, others who could forsake all to follow Him, and count not their lives dear to serve Him; and that also not as *unmarried* men. Paul might, he says, have "led about a wife" with him, as most of the "other apostles" did. I do not fear, therefore, that either the sons or daughters of

Zion will be deterred from going far hence unto the Gentiles ; but I do fear that parents, and especially mothers, will shrink from the proposal of both sons and daughters who wish to go, and even from the former purpose of their own hearts to let them go. “ And can you wonder ? ” it may be said ; “ what mother or father would or could risk the life of an only or a promising son, amongst blood-thirsty savages ? ” I feel the force of this question, and my own heart quivers at the bare idea of any child of mine being thus cut off, or even jeopardied on “ the high places ” of the heathen world. This seems in one sense a trial of faith severer than Abraham’s on mount Moriah ; for although he himself had to be the priest in that mysterious and staggering sacrifice, he had the express command of God to offer Isaac, and perhaps more knowledge of the design of God than we imagine : whercas,

we are not absolutely sure that God *requires us* to lay our Isaac on the altar of missions. The utmost we know of His will is, that He wants labourers in the foreign vineyard of His church, and that He will send forth more of them in answer to her prayers, and in order to redeem his own pledge, to give the heathen as the heritage of His son. Although, therefore, we are thus sure that God will anoint many a son and daughter of Zion to this work, "with His holy oil," we are not sure that the sacred horn will be poured by Providence on the head of any of our children. On the other hand, however, we cannot be *sure* that it will not be poured out in our family. Our children are already consecrated to God by baptism or prayer, and He may baptize some of them "with the Holy Ghost and with fire;" for there is no telling where this baptism may fall. It has hitherto fallen

chiefly upon the children of the poor and middle classes in the church of Christ. Not many rich, and none of the noble, have been called yet, to missionary work. Besides, we can assign no reason why our children should be exempt from being drawn into the *militia* of "the armies of the living God." By all the military laws of heaven, they are as *liable* to serve, if not also bound to volunteer, as the children of any other family of the land, which fears God, or honours the king whom God has "set upon His holy hill of Zion." Thus, like Jesse of Bethlehem Juda, we are of "the tribe," in which God chooses and anoints Davids for the service of the church; and when he wants a "multitude of preachers," he may say to some Samuel amongst the prophets, "Fill thine horn with oil, and go; I will send thee to the Bethlehemite; for I have provided me a king amongst his sons." Are

we then, like Jesse, prepared to bring forth *all* our sons, when, like him, we are called to the sacrifice?" Will you allow him to be anointed "in the midst of his brethren whom the Lord shall name"?

Mothers in Israel! much depends on you, when this anointing for missionary work begins to go the round of all the missionary-spirited churches. Would you wish it to pass by *your* door? This is not a harsh question, although it refers to a hard trial. True, there are perils abroad. But are there no perils at home? You can refuse your child to missions, but you cannot guarantee his life at home. You can throw yourself between him and the heathen, but not between him and the grave. You may peril his life more by your love, than even Erromanga would by its cruelty: for now that God in answer to the prayers of the church is begun to "Remember the

dark places of the earth, which are the habitations of cruelty," Christ will act again upon the original maxim which first gave missionaries to the heathen and martyrs to the church,—
"He that loveth son or daughter, father or mother, more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it. Fear not them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him who can cast both soul and body into hell." (Mat. x. 28, 37.) This was the law and the testimony when the Apostles were sent on their first mission; and now the old rule seems about to be applied again in the church, it may soon be at *your* door!

It is of no use to shut our eyes upon either facts or probabilities; for we have had a *hand* in bringing on the growing demand for missionaries. We have bought, and paid for,

with our own money, the *liability* of our own children to be drawn into the ranks of the missionary army, as old soldiers fall and new fields open. We did not, perhaps, intend this, nor even think of it, when we began to subscribe to missions, and made our children subscribers or collectors. But whatever we intended, the fact is, that now, above £500,000 are applicable, annually, to the support and extension of missions ; and, therefore, the missionaries must come from where the money comes, and by *hundreds* annually. This draft from the families of them that fear God is now inevitable. We have helped to make it so, and it will remain so even if we ceased to subscribe : for the *spirit* of missions is now, like the mighty angel of the Apocalypse, upon the wing in the midst of heaven, to preach the everlasting Gospel to all nations ; and no such defection will or can occur in the

funds of Missionary Societies, as could place our children as we stood in our young days. I state these facts clearly and strongly, that you may be aware of the consequences, and prepared for them.

CHAPTER XII.

MATERNAL INFLUENCE ON THE SAVIOUR.

THE human *form* is not human nature. The Son of God often appeared in the form of the son of man, before his incarnation, to the founders of both the Patriarchal and Jewish church. Indeed, all his ancient appearances to the fathers, as the angel of the covenant, were as man-like as god-like. Then, however, "The Word was neither made flesh," nor wore "the form of a servant." Now, just as the form of humanity was not incarnation, so a mere *body* would not have been humanity. In order to be either in or of human nature, it was necessary that the Saviour should be "made of a woman" as well as made flesh. Only by *birth* could

He take upon himself our nature. Taking "part in flesh and blood," is not *all* the incarnation. That, in order to be human nature, had to be taken according to the course of nature; for *infancy* is as much a part of humanity as manhood. A man created like Adam would be a human being; but he would not be "bone of our bone, nor flesh of our flesh." He would be like us, but not *one* of us, even if all his faculties and functions were the same as our own. Now, all this would have been the case with the Saviour, had he not been born of a woman as well as "manifest in the flesh." "The second Adam, who is the Lord from Heaven," would not have been an incarnation of our nature, had his body, like that of the first Adam, been created from the dust of the earth.

These hints suggest the real reason of the manner in which the incarnation was effected.

The grand object of the incarnation was the redemption of human nature; and, therefore, that nature had to be taken in all its sinless properties, and in all its weakness as well as strength, and at all its stages from life till death, that it might be *represented* at each stage, in the work of the Redeemer. Accordingly, He passed through all the stages of humanity, and as fully through infancy and childhood, as through youth and manhood, because He came to die for the youngest as well as for the adult, the mature, and the old. As an old divine says, "He became a babe, that he might save infants; and a child, that he might save children; and a man, that he might save men." You cannot but approve and admire this *moral* reason for the infancy and childhood of the Saviour. It is as beautiful as it is true! And what weight and force it has, when you remember

the fact, that more than half the human race die very young; and that hitherto the kingdom of heaven has been chiefly inherited by "little children"! This gives a glory to the *cradle* of "the holy child Jesus," akin to the glories of his cross and throne.

These reasons for the incarnation, although not thus definitely and distinctly before the public mind in general, are yet, in their *spirit*, felt by all Christendom, more or less. The infant Saviour is not less admired and adored, than the crucified or enthroned Saviour. The *heart* of our common humanity responds to the song of the Angels at Bethlehem. A Saviour *born*, is "glad tidings of great joy" to millions who do not exactly understand the full real import of the good news. Christmas shows this to be true. Except therefore where infidelity has seared the heart as well as the conscience, the infancy and childhood

of the Saviour lay hold upon both the mind and heart, like a heavenly spell or charm. Not all the-mystery of the incarnation, even when it is announced in its most absolute form, disturbs either the composure or the complacency of a sober mind, in thinking of the "holy child Jesus." We can realize and gaze on the Babe of Bethlehem, in the manger, or in his mother's bosom, and feel no confusion of ideas or emotions whilst saying to ourselves, "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily! Great is the mystery of godliness! God was manifest in the flesh!" Thus whilst the mystery hallows the incarnation, the infancy softens the mystery. Wonder and delight blend at the manger, and awe and love bow and burn equally. And for an obvious reason. No contemplative mind, if at all well disposed and well regulated, finds any more real difficulty in connecting the

fact of divinity with the form of humanity in "the *child* Jesus," than in the "*man* Christ Jesus;" for childhood presents no greater contrast to Godhead, than manhood presents, so far as the *union* of a finite and infinite nature is concerned. It is just as easy to conceive how the Divine essence could be incorporated with the infancy, as with the maturity, of a human body, when there is a sufficient reason for the union, and the same purpose to be answered by it; which is the case, as we have seen.

I throw out these hints thus freely and carefully, that you may not be afraid to think of either the childhood or boyhood of the Saviour. What He was not ashamed to become and remain; but even *delighted* to be for the sake of the young, a Christian mother, especially, ought not to overlook, nor fear to study. Both the parents and teachers of the young may learn lessons, and derive impressions

from the study of the Saviour's childhood, which are to be found nowhere else, in the same form or power.

One of the finest chapters which Jeremy Taylor ever wrote, is "On nursing Children in imitation of the Virgin Mother." That example, he says, is enough to "kindle the heart from a cinder to a flame." Often have I regretted that the eloquent bishop did not employ his inimitable pen in sketching her whole maternal character. She was evidently full of wisdom and prudence. The Saviour's love to her was evidently *natural* love as well as divine love ; or because she was *such* a mother ! Indeed, His tenderness to the mothers of Israel and their infants, was evidently influenced by His warm affection for her. And he thought of her temporal safety and comfort, even when the weight of the world's eternal interests was pressing His

soul to death, and whilst the sword of justice was striking its last mortal blows. In like manner, His fondness for children was conspicuous and uniform. He never deemed it beneath Him to take infants in his arms, nor unworthy of Him to bless them, or to preach about them. He even condescended to identify himself so closely with "little children," as to say, "Whosoever receiveth one such little child in my name receiveth me:" thus connecting them with himself now, as he will acknowledge at the judgment-seat kindness done to "the least of his brethren," as relief administered to himself. This twofold identification of himself with the young and the poor is based upon the same *natural* reason : the Saviour knew by experience the feelings or heart of both. He had been a child, and thus knew experimentally the sweetness of kind attentions ; just as He had been homeless and

hungry, and thus understood want and charity. It is thus as true that He learned gratitude from the things he *enjoyed*, as "obedience from the things he suffered;" (Heb. v. 8;) and as true that He now sympathizes with those who care for little children, as with those who are afflicted or tempted.

I do not know that Dr. Watts meant all this when he sang of our high priest,

"He in the days of feeble flesh,
Poured forth his cries and tears,
And in his measure feels afresh
What every member hears;"

but this is just as true of His childhood as of His manhood. He remembers upon the eternal throne his boyhood in Nazareth, as well as his temptation in the wilderness, and his agony in the garden, and his sacrifice on the cross. Indeed, He sees around that throne, more of the spirits of young children "made

perfect," than of "just men," so far as heaven is yet peopled from the earth. Upon the very same principle, therefore, as the Saviour feels himself glorified and delighted by the presence of departed children in the kingdom of heaven—from His love to children—he feels a lively and deep interest in living children on earth, and in all who love them for his "name's sake." He is as naturally, and as much, pleased with wise and kind attentions to the education of the young, as with considerate kindness to the poor. He as much remembers his own childhood, when he sees parents and teachers take little children in their arms to *bless* them, as He remembers his own wants and woes when He sees faith working by love for the needy and the afflicted.

They do not understand the incarnation, nor appreciate the character and spirit of the Saviour, who doubt or overlook this view of

the matter. It does not lie, indeed, *exactly* upon the surface of his history, nor take its place at once in the mind even when it is discerned; but it can be traced through all His life, and it was sealed at his death when his last look fell upon his weeping mother, whose heart had been always so warm to him, and her hands so ready!

You can hardly feel more acutely than I do the extreme *delicacy* of this subject. He must think twice, and then weigh his words carefully, who would speak once, with propriety, about the childhood of the Saviour; for it was, of course, like no other childhood, in many respects. It could have no follies, nor foibles, nor wayward tempers, nor wrong desires. The "child Jesus" must have been equally "holy and harmless," lovely and amiable. His intelligence also, although not unnatural, must have been unparalleled, both as to knowledge

and wisdom. Still his childhood, although perfect, was but childhood. Accordingly, whilst it commanded universal admiration, it created no public *astonishment*, until "He was twelve years old." Before that period, Luke says, "The child grew and waxed strong in spirit, and was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him ;" but so natural was all this developement of His divine powers, that no one had any conception of their divinity in the strict sense of that word. Joseph and Mary knew him to be the Son of God in a miraculous sense ; but it was wisely ordered that they should know only that He was the Messiah : for such knowledge as we have of him would have unfitted them to discharge their parental duties to him. Had his mother, even, known all, during his childhood, which she discovered from his ministry and miracles, when he began to avow his

equality with God, she could not have nursed him in infancy, nor cherished him in boyhood. Awe would have overpowered nature, and paralyzed love. Old Simeon knew this, even in reference to what the Saviour had to suffer, and therefore told Mary only of the sword which should pierce her *own* soul. And if it was thus necessary, in order to her health, and composure, and joy, as a “nursing mother,” to conceal from her, whilst she was so, the mystery of His *sacrifice*,—how much more so to throw an impenetrable veil over the mystery of His Godhead !

I increasingly feel that I am upon “holy ground.” Nothing but the holiness of my *purpose* could keep, or have led, me upon it. But we must not retreat now. We have gone too far for that. And, happily, there is no occasion for any fear, but holy fear: for notwithstanding all the ineffable mystery and

glory which invests this subject, its *practical* point is the simplest and sweetest in domestic virtue.

First. *The childhood of the Saviour is the grand example to be set before children, for their imitation.*

The virtues of His youth are just as much intended for them, as the virtues of His manhood are for us ; and the former are as intelligible to children, as the latter to parents. Besides, “the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” which we are bound to bring up our children in, is just the *way* in which the Lord himself was brought up by Mary and Joseph at Nazareth. He condescended to be brought up by them, that we might be able to point out to our children a perfect example of obedience, submission, love, and gratitude. For, O say not that we know but little about

His childhood or youth. The *silence* of Scripture sometimes speaks more and louder than words could do. Accordingly, what a tale we have to tell on this subject to the young ! It is this,—that the Saviour in his boyhood never once uttered a false, foolish, pert, or unkind word, to his mother, or to Joseph, or to any one ;—that He was never once seen angry, or peevish, or sulky, or dissatisfied ;—that He never once quarrelled with his brothers or sisters, nor envied them, nor teased them, nor mocked them, nor refused to help them ;—that He never once made his mother unhappy, nor Joseph angry, nor any of his neighbours in Nazareth displeased with him ;—that no one at home ever complained of Him at night, nor in the morning ; nor had any one out of doors, to find fault with Him during all the day ! All this, we know, is true. We are sure of its truth, both from His own perfect

nature, and from the fact that no charge was ever brought against His character and spirit in childhood or boyhood. Luke says expressly that Jesus continued "subject" to Joseph and Mary, even after his return from arguing with the "Doctors" in the temple ; and that He continued to "increase in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." (ii. 51, 52.)

We have thus a *perfect* example of both personal and relative piety, to hold up before the young, in the character of the youthful Saviour ; and its perfection is the grand reason for holding it up to them. He intended it as much for them, perfect as it is, as He intended the character of God to be our example, when he said, "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect ; be ye merciful as He is merciful." As a living writer well says, "It is no objection to the moral reasonableness of

the imitation enjoined in the sacred writings, that it often consults and pursues the Infinite. There is before us an eternal career, beyond the present opportunity. But for that Infinite, the mind would reach a limit, and then happiness must terminate with progression." (*R. W. Hamilton's Sermons.*) Our children are, therefore, just treated in Scripture as we ourselves are, and for the same reason. Our training, and theirs, have an equal connexion with, and reference to, eternity and eventual perfection ; and therefore both are to be carried on now, according to a perfect rule and model. The impossibility of reaching perfection now, is nothing to the purpose. For, what although no child can be like Jesus, and no man like God? Both will be better, by copying their example, than by imitating an imperfect model. Besides, it is *honouring* God and the Lamb to study their character chiefly, and to

look most to their image and spirit ; and therefore the likeliest way to secure the blessing of the Holy Ghost. Nor is this all the fact of the case. We point out, and commend, and enforce, only what is truly good and excellent, in the other examples we place before the young ; and it is only what is good, or lovely, or praiseworthy in any character, that either pleases or profits them. Children take no pleasure in the *faults* of the good men and women, whose history they find in the Bible ; but are rather sorry, than otherwise, that Jacob told lies to Esau, and that Peter denied Christ with oaths and curses. You may see from a child's face, when reading or hearing the lives of the saints, that he would be glad, and love them better, had they had fewer faults and greater virtues. Now it is for this reason, as well as for many others equally valid, that the Lord's

own "nurture and admonition" is the only rule laid down in the New Testament for the training of children. They do not *admire* faults, however prone they may be to imitate them. I speak, of course, of children who have been taught from the Scriptures to "discern between good and evil," in the character of the holy men and women of old; and you never saw a child, so taught, delighted with their faults. The perfection of the Saviour's example is, therefore, its *glory* to a child, when well and wisely exhibited: for he has no objection to a faultless model, whilst his little heart is unsophisticated. Indeed, he rather prefers it, because it is all alike beautiful. Besides, it is the finest and most direct way of leading the young mind to distinguish between the Saviour, and all the prophets and apostles, to show His infinite superiority even in youth, to the greatest and best of mankind.

This is a proof of his being "more than man," which comes *home* to children, and best prepares them to believe His Godhead and mediation.

You are now thinking, perhaps, that there would be some danger of *lowering* the Saviour in the estimation of the young, were you to dwell much or often upon His early life. But this is quite a mistake. His cradle, like His cross, vindicates itself, by its attendant glories. You are not afraid nor ashamed to speak to your children of the sufferings or the death of Christ. And you have no occasion. His speedy resurrection and splendid ascension soon counterbalance any difficulty which the death of Emmanuel suggests to the young mind. And in like manner, the Shechinah of glory, and the Star of Bethlehem, and the worshipping Magi, and the multitude of the heavenly host, and the burst of celestial

music, all blending around the manger of Emmanuel, render His infancy as sublime as His boyhood is lovely, or His manhood illustrious. God has taken care, by the manner in which He brought his Only-Begotten into the world, that no unfavourable impressions should be left or made upon any unvitiated and unsophisticated mind, by the weakness or wants of the holy child. All orders of intellect, at all the stages of mind, like "all the angels of God," can find reasons at Bethlehem for worshipping Him.

Second. *The spirit of Joseph and Mary, in their deep and devoted solicitude for the safety and welfare of the young Messiah, is the intended model of parental watchfulness.*

It is by attributing to them a degree of knowledge which they did not possess at first, that this is not felt with all the force of a

sensation, as well as of a maxim. They knew nothing but just what "the Angel of the Lord," and aged Simeon and Anna, told them concerning the Saviour, until He himself entered upon his public life. They did not fully understand even all that was told them concerning "the young child." This is no conjecture. Luke says expressly, that Joseph and Mary "*marvelled* at those things which were spoken of him." (ii. 33.) Even Mary, who "kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart," although amazed, was nowise embarrassed by them. She knew her son to be "the Son of God," and the Messiah; but had no such knowledge of the "great mystery of godliness," as to be afraid or over-awed, or confused, in the discharge of the ordinary duties of a nursing mother. She *remonstrated* with her son, even after He was twelve years of age, as freely as

if he had not been the Son of God. "His mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou dealt thus with us?" Luke explains all this by saying that neither Joseph nor Mary "understood the saying which He spoke unto them," when He said, "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (ii. 48, 50.) In like manner, they had no such ideas of His innate and ineffable glory, as to trust his safety to his own resources; but fled with him from Herod, and kept out of Archilaus's reach, just as they would have done in order to protect an ordinary child, whose life was threatened. There is nothing surprising in this. The fact is, no one had any such knowledge of Christ as we have, until the day of Pentecost. Nothing He ever said to the apostles, whilst on earth with them, at all embarrassed their inter-

course with him, either in public or private. They knew him to be the Messiah and Son of God ; but they conversed with Him, and travelled with him, and eat and drank with Him, as freely as with each other. And as they could do so, when both His ministry and miracles were at the height, just so could Joseph and Mary attend to His nurture and admonition as a child.

In both cases, however, the attention to the Saviour, and the intercourse with Him, must have been sublime beyond all description. The disciples treated Him as the Messiah, and Joseph and Mary trained Him as such,—each party according to their own views of the Messiahship, but both with high views of its dignity, and with holy views of its design, and with zealous solicitude to promote His grand object, as they understood it.

Now, we can realize to ourselves, without

either the fear or danger of erring, "the nurture and admonition of the Lord" himself in youth. As "the Son of God," he had *planned* that nothing should intimidate or embarrass any one connected with him, when He was "manifest in the flesh." He intended to be a model for children, and therefore placed himself exactly in their circumstances, prepared and delighted to accept all the watching, teaching, kindness, and training, which other children require, and which all parents ought to give. Not, indeed, that He needed them in such a sense as that He could not have done without them. No! there is the *beauty* of His accepting them, and being pleased with them! All other children needed them; and, therefore, He made himself as much dependent upon them as any child can be, just that all might get them for his sake, and with the same

goodwill as Joseph and Mary trained him. Now, the whole matter is equally plain and pleasing ! Nothing but sheer folly or impiety could now ask, "What could Joseph or Mary *teach* Eminent ? Or, how could the Son of God take lessons ?" All children need "nurture and admonition ;" and that all might get and take these family blessings, He took them readily, and repaid them gratefully.

The fact that He "increased in favour with man" as He grew up, throws much light upon this. He must have conducted himself with great urbanity and courtesy in Nazareth, to be thus a general favourite. You feel at once, that He must have taken all the friendly attentions of his kinsfolk and neighbours with perfect frankness, pleasure, and gratitude. A kind look or word, or any little present, must have brought smiles and thanks upon His lips, which went to the *heart* of his bene-

factors. In no other way can we account for His popularity at home, during his youth. He must have been affable and easily pleased, even to a proverb, in Galilee. Now all these kind attentions He could have done without, so far as he was personally concerned : but He welcomed them all, because he intended to be the grand Exemplar of affability and gratitude, to all Christians until the end of time.

In like manner, He made himself dependent upon the hospitality and benevolence of his disciples, male and female, just that he might draw forth their love, and teach his Apostles to live by faith. He could have sustained his life by special miracle upon the *springs* of life, or by perpetual miracles provided all the means of life ; but He preferred to be both homeless and hungry at times, rather than seem *above* accepting help, and that he might encourage hospitality.

Now just so, Emmanuel, that he might be an everlasting pattern to all children, of docility, amiableness, filial love, and obedience, exemplified the perfect child, boy and youth, as naturally and fully as He did the perfect man afterwards, as the everlasting pattern to men. He accepted whatever instruction or counsel Joseph and Mary could give him in his youth, just as He accepted the hospitalities of Lazarus and his sisters in manhood, with grateful complacency, and visible satisfaction.

Thus, instead of there being anything derogatory to His glory, or unworthy of His Godhead, in submitting to the nurture and admonition of either his mother or Joseph, the fact that "He was subject to them" is in full harmony with all his glory, and infinitely worthy of his grand design. Dying children were to be His chief reward for ages, and the regular harvest of it to be reaped in pious families ;

and, therefore, he did as much to exemplify early piety at all its stages, and in all its forms, during his private life, as he did in public life, to embody the perfect man. Thus Emmanuel did not think lightly of what is done for children. He would have been a *scholar*, had there been a Sunday-school at Nazareth, as really and cheerfully as He sat at his mother's knee. Those who doubt this, neither understand the design of the incarnation, nor partake the spirit of Christ towards children. He loved children as much as men, and as He knew that "the child is the *parent* of the man," rather than risk their souls for Eternity, or their character for Time, he made himself a child!

THE END.

